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ABSTRACT

The Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program was evaluated from the standpoint of its impact on three groups: VISTA volunteers, communities served by VISTA sponsors, and sponsoring organizations to which VISTA volunteers are assigned. Survey questionnaires were sent to 1,250 of the 3,400 VISTA volunteers currently in service, 494 current and former VISTA supervisors, and 750 members of communities served by VISTA projects. Response rates ranged from 87 percent for supervisors and community members to 64 percent for volunteers. The study established that 75 percent of VISTA volunteers have attended college, and 80 percent lived in the community served by their sponsoring organizations before volunteering for VISTA. Most VISTA volunteers worked in the areas of community planning and organization, education, and literacy training at an average direct cost to the federal government of $11,837 annually. Volunteers reported gaining considerable benefits from their VISTA experience, including personal satisfaction, career development, and increased community awareness. VISTA projects have been catalysts for improving the capacity of sponsoring organizations to serve local communities, and sponsors and communities are often able to sustain VISTA initiatives after VISTA funding ends. (The four questionnaires are appended. Eleven references are listed.) (MN)

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An Evaluation Report on Volunteers in Service to America

May 1993

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VISTA

An Evaluation Report on Volunteers in Service to America

Submitted Under Contract Number: 92-743-1001
to:

ACTION
Office of Policy, Research and Evaluation
Program Analysis and Evaluation Division
1100 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Originally authorized in 1964 by the Economic Opportunity Act, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) was initiated to provide qualified Volunteers to community and neighborhood organizations in the United States and its territories. VISTA's mission is to encourage and enable ". . . persons from all walks of life and age groups, including elderly and retired Americans, to perform meaningful and constructive volunteer service in agencies, institutions, and situations where the application of human talent and dedication may assist in the solution of poverty and poverty-related problems and secure and exploit opportunities of self-enhancement by persons afflicted with such problems" (Public Law 93-113).

This report documents the results of an evaluation of the VISTA program, conducted in 1992 and 1993. The evaluation had three goals: (1) provide ACTION with an overall description of VISTA projects, the numbers and types of persons being served, Volunteer activities and outcomes; (2) determine the degree to which VISTA is meeting the objectives set forth in its legislative mandates; and (3) assess the strengths and weaknesses of VISTA.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The evaluation focused on the impact of VISTA projects on three groups: the VISTA Volunteers, the communities served by the sponsors and the sponsoring organizations to which the Volunteers are assigned.

Surveys questionnaires were sent to 1,250 of 3,400 VISTA Volunteers currently in service, 494 current and former VISTA Supervisors and 750 members of the communities served by VISTA projects. Response rates ranged from 87% for VISTA Supervisors and community members to 64% for VISTA Volunteers.

The findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in this report are based on an analysis of the survey responses and selected site visits. Our findings are summarized below.

Participant Characteristics

VISTA Volunteers

Most VISTA Volunteers are well-qualified for the tasks they are assigned to perform. Most (75%) have attended college; 14% of these have attended some graduate school. Eighty percent lived in the community served by the sponsoring organization before joining VISTA. The average age of VISTA Volunteers is 36 years. The majority are female (77%) and 42% are minorities. The predominant activities of Volunteers are community planning and organization, education and literacy. The average direct yearly cost to the Federal government for a VISTA Volunteer is $11,837. Once recruited and assigned to their projects, most VISTA Volunteers (81%) complete their one-year service commitment and more than half extend their commitment into a second year of service.

Communities

VISTA Volunteers serve individuals and families most in need: the poor, unemployed and under-educated. Eighty percent of the families served by VISTA sponsors are at or below the poverty line, 65% of the families receive some form of public assistance and 22% of the community have less than a 9th-grade education. The unemployment rate in these communities is 10%, compared to a national level of 7.4%. Fifty-eight percent of the residents are members of minority groups. VISTA serves many of these residents across a wide range of age categories.

Sponsoring Organizations

The sponsors of VISTA projects are experienced, local organizations that have served their communities for a long period of time, averaging 15 years. About 33% are community service organizations, 25% represent other types of non-profit organizations, 15% are community action groups and 15% are public institutions representing state, county or school districts. Most sponsors are small institutions with a median of six full-time and two part-time paid staff supported by a network of 85 community volunteers. The sponsors have a median annual cash budget of approximately $300,000.

Project Outcomes of Participants

VISTA Volunteers

Volunteers gain many benefits from the VISTA experience which influence their lives. Forty-one percent of the VISTA Volunteers reported that they gained personal satisfaction from serving persons in low-income communities. Eighty-six percent reported that they joined VISTA primarily to serve and improve their community; only 13% said they joined to gain employment experience.

According to the VISTA Supervisors, a successful VISTA Volunteer experience is influenced by the size of the sponsoring organization's budget, the usefulness of in-service training, adequate skills of the VISTA Volunteer and formal personnel appraisals.

Almost half (49%) of the VISTA Supervisors believed that the most important benefit to the Volunteers was career development. They reported that the Volunteers gained new skills and knowledge that would enhance their employability and professionalism. Many Volunteers (27%) plan to continue to work for their sponsors after their VISTA service has ended.

Community members emphasized that VISTA Volunteers experienced a growth in community awareness as they learned about the problems, needs and resources of low-income communities. One-half of these members reported this gain as the primary benefit for Volunteers.

More than one-third of VISTA Volunteers reported that after finishing their current VISTA assignment, they planned to re-enroll with VISTA. Ninety-seven percent of Volunteers reported that they would choose to become a VISTA Volunteer, if they had to do it over again.

Communities

VISTA Volunteers provide benefits to communities in many ways by working directly and indirectly with clients. More than half (53%) reported working directly with clients in areas such as counseling, teaching and/or tutoring activities. One-half of the projects serve the needs of older Americans, almost half reach unemployed persons and families in crisis, and at least one-third meet the needs of homeless individuals. Community members acknowledged that VISTA Volunteers work in important areas of community need, but they also indicated that VISTA projects should be addressing other priority needs such as economic development (20%) and outreach and awareness (18%). Still 99% of the community members rated the VISTA projects as "somewhat successful" in addressing community needs and almost half (44%) rated the projects as "very successful."

Sponsoring Organizations

As a result of VISTA projects, organizations gain greater community involvement, a larger client base, stronger links to other organizations and more money. VISTA Volunteers and their Supervisors agree on the areas in which Volunteers have the most influence in enhancing the efforts of their sponsors: developing partnerships with other organizations, increasing the number of clients served and recruiting community volunteers. They reported that the number of community volunteers and regular clients tripled as a result of the VISTA project. The median numbers reported by VISTA project supervisors were 148 new clients and 38 community volunteers. VISTA Volunteers (59%) engage in increasing the resources of their sponsors. The median cash amounts attributed to VISTA Volunteers was $23,000.

Most of the VISTA Supervisors (92%) and Volunteers (89%) said that their VISTA project was successful in achieving its goals. More than 70% of the VISTA Volunteers and 80% of the VISTA Supervisors indicated that the services provided through VISTA will continue after the VISTA project ends.

Similarly, many services provided to low-income communities by sponsoring organizations increased and improved after VISTA funding ended. Former VISTA Supervisors reported major increases in new plans (70%) and partnerships (64%) in the number of new clients (63%), in-kind resources (55%), cash resources (49%) community volunteers recruited (53%) and the number of paid staff (47%).

CONCLUSIONS

- VISTA Volunteers provide valuable services on an economical basis to local communities in their struggle against poverty.
- VISTA Volunteers fulfill their one-year commitment and successfully perform their tasks.
- VISTA Volunteers gain considerable benefits from their VISTA experience.
- VISTA projects are catalysts for improving the capacity of sponsoring organizations serving local communities.
- Sponsors and communities are demonstrating the ability to sustain VISTA initiatives after VISTA funding ends.
- Economic development is emerging as a priority community need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The VISTA program should be expanded to serve a greater number of communities.
- VISTA should develop improved guidelines for sponsors in the area of assessing priority community needs.
- VISTA should assign VISTA Volunteers to sponsoring organizations in which Volunteers can have the greatest catalytic effect on local communities.
- VISTA should emphasize to the sponsors the program characteristics that are most associated with a successful VISTA Volunteer experience.

Glossary of Terms	
ACTION	The Federal domestic volunteer agency created by Congress in 1971 to coordinate the actions of Federal domestic volunteer programs (e.g., VISTA, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Senior Companions, Student Community Service, Drug Alliance and Foster Grandparents).
VISTA	Volunteers in Service to America, a Federal program of national Volunteers assigned to local communities to work on projects designed to reduce poverty in low-income areas in the United States and its territories. The program was authorized originally by Congress in 1964 and subsequently included under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-113).
VISTA Literacy Corps	Authorized and created by Congress through the Domestic Volunteer Service Act Amendments of 1986 (Public Law 99-551) for the specific purpose of assigning VISTA Volunteers to programs designed to develop, strengthen, supplement and expand efforts to overcome illiteracy.
Sponsor	State, local or private non-profit organization or foundation to which VISTA Volunteers are assigned.
VISTA project	An administrative term used to identify VISTA Volunteers assigned to a sponsoring organization.
Sustainability	A measure of the likelihood that a project will continue to be supported by a sponsor after the VISTA effort has ended (i.e., a measure of the vitality of a project in terms of its ability to continue to offer effective services).

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an evaluation of ACTION's Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program. The evaluation focuses on the activities of VISTA Volunteers, the communities in which Volunteers serve and their sponsoring organizations. The overall aim of the evaluation is to obtain a current perspective on the VISTA program. Chapter One addresses VISTA's mission and goals, administrative structure, and program scope and the manner in which the evaluation was conducted. Chapter Two describes the characteristics of VISTA Volunteers, their respective community settings and their sponsoring organizations. Chapter Three presents the outcomes of the work performed by VISTA Volunteers, and Chapter Four offers conclusions and recommendations.

AN OVERVIEW OF VISTA

Originally authorized in 1964 by the Economic Opportunity Act, VISTA was initiated to provide qualified volunteers to community and neighborhood organizations in the United States and its territories. VISTA Volunteers work to combat malnutrition, inadequate housing, poor education and numerous other conditions associated with poverty.

VISTA is part of ACTION, the Federal agency for Federal domestic volunteer programs. ACTION is authorized by Reorganization Plan No. 1, July 1, 1971, and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-113), as amended. VISTA's mission, as defined in this legislation, is:

> *"To strengthen and supplement efforts to eliminate poverty and poverty-related human, social, and environmental problems in the United States by encouraging and enabling persons from all walks of life and age groups, including elderly and retired Americans, to perform meaningful and constructive volunteer service in agencies, institutions, and situations where the application of human talent and dedication may assist in the solution of poverty and poverty-related problems and secure and exploit opportunities of self-enhancement by persons afflicted with such problems" (Public Law 93-113).*

In 1993, VISTA celebrates its 28th year of helping low-income persons become self-sufficient. In these 28 years, nearly 100,000 VISTA Volunteers have served in more than 12,000 projects and community settings. At the end of January 1993, about 3,400 VISTA Volunteers were assigned to 775 projects around the country. The 775 projects include approximately 125 VISTA Literacy Corps projects that are part of the VISTA program but are administered under a separate appropriation.

The VISTA program is based on three assumptions:

1. Private citizens can, on a voluntary basis, contribute to the solution of the nation's domestic poverty problems.

2. The skills and energies of Volunteers are used most effectively when Volunteers live and work with the low-income persons they serve.

3. The full-time presence and personal involvement of Volunteers bring an added dimension to the public and private institutions working to eliminate poverty.

As a national program, VISTA provides VISTA Volunteers to organizations whose missions are compatible with VISTA's mission to alleviate poverty. These Volunteers normally serve full-time for one year (although extensions are permitted in certain cases) and are required to live among and at the economic level of the persons they serve. VISTA does not operate as an independent entity, but rather assigns Volunteers to sponsoring organizations to perform tasks deemed appropriate by the organizations. Sponsoring organizations can be government agencies (state or local) or private, non-profit entities committed to solving problems associated with poverty.

Sponsoring organizations are responsible for planning and developing programs that can utilize VISTA Volunteers. The programs are required to reflect: (1) active participation of low-income members of the community; (2) mobilization of resources from public and private sources; and (3) assumption of the Volunteer's duties by other community members when the VISTA project ends.

The third requirement is emphasized in the Domestic Volunteer Service Act Amendments of 1986, which states that an objective for VISTA is to generate the commitment of private-sector resources and to encourage additional volunteer service at the local level to carry out the purposes of the program (42 U.S.C. 4951).

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

ACTION provides administrative services, general training and financial support to administer VISTA through nine regional offices and 47 state offices. Sponsors provide additional training, supervision and management. In some instances, ACTION supports regional VISTA and state VISTA projects which allows for managing several sites under a single administrative unit.

ACTION and Its Relationship to VISTA Projects

VISTA is a non-grant program in which ACTION relates directly to both VISTA Volunteers and project sponsors. ACTION communicates with sponsors about local needs. The VISTA Volunteers are then assigned to sponsoring organizations which provide supervision and

support for the Volunteers. Sponsoring organizations benefit from receiving the services of one or more VISTA Volunteers for the duration of a project.

Becoming a VISTA Sponsor

ACTION reviews all applications for potential VISTA sponsors. Sponsors must be public or non-profit organizations. The organizations must have poverty-related programs and otherwise comply with the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-113), as amended (see 42 U.S.C. 4951 et seq.), and with published regulations, guidelines and ACTION policies applicable to VISTA. VISTA sponsors must also:

- Comply with applicable financial and fiscal requirements established by ACTION or other Federal components;
- Show that the goals, objectives, and Volunteer tasks are attainable within the timeframe of the VISTA project;
- Demonstrate that a Volunteer's efforts will produce a measurable, verifiable result;
- Provide for reasonable efforts to recruit and involve low-income community residents in planning, developing and implementing the VISTA project;
- Offer evidence of local public and private-sector support and design the project to generate private-sector resources and local volunteer service; and
- Demonstrate sufficient managerial and technical capacity to implement the project successfully and provide effective supervision of Volunteers and the resources needed for the Volunteers' tasks.

ACTION state offices review applications from potential sponsors and assign Volunteers to the organizations selected. The number of Volunteers assigned in a state is based on the number of Volunteer Service Years (VSYs) available for that state as allocated by ACTION. Sponsoring organizations must apply for renewal of a VISTA project each year. Aside from some limited supervision and travel funds for VISTA Volunteers, sponsoring organizations do not receive any funds directly from ACTION. The percentage of sponsors by type is outlined in Table 1.1.

VISTA Recruitment

VISTA provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to volunteer on a full-time basis. To volunteer for VISTA service, an individual must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident and at least 18 years old. Volunteers are assigned to sponsoring organizations for one year to perform activities identified by the sponsor.

TABLE 1.1 WHERE VISTA VOLUNTEERS SERVE	
Type of Sponsor	Percent of All Sponsors
Private non-profit organizations	66%
State, county or local governments	16%
Educational institutions (all types)	7%
Church-affiliated organizations	5%
All other sponsor types	6%

Source: Congressional Briefing on VISTA, March 1993

Local sponsors usually recruit their own VISTA Volunteers after the ACTION state office approves a project and establishes the number of Volunteers for a site. Most sponsors recruit VISTA Volunteers from the local community in which the VISTA project will be located. In recent years, ACTION has mounted a national recruitment campaign for Volunteers and, in some cases, refers potential Volunteers from outside the local community to a local sponsor. These Volunteers are labeled "ACTION Referred Volunteers." All VISTA Volunteers must be approved by ACTION.

VISTA Volunteer Service

VISTA Volunteers live and work among the poor and serve in urban and rural areas, including Indian reservations. Because they live at the socioeconomic level of the local community, VISTA Volunteers gain a fuller appreciation and awareness of the day-to-day problems encountered by community members striving to overcome the conditions of poverty. Presently, about 60% of VISTA Volunteers are serving in urban areas, and about 40% are serving in rural localities.[1]

Volunteer efforts are channeled into well-defined, VISTA initiative areas, such as illiteracy, hunger, unemployment, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, health and economic development. Table 1.2 lists the areas in which VISTA Volunteers are primarily working today.

[1]ACTION uses the U.S. Bureau of the Census definition of rural and urban areas: Communities of less than 50,000 inhabitants are considered rural, and areas with larger populations are designated urban.

TABLE 1.2
WHAT VISTA VOLUNTEERS DO

VISTA Activity	Percent of Volunteers
Literacy	40%
Employment assistance	21%
Housing and shelter	16%
Health	8%
Economic development	6%
All other activities*	9%

*Includes activities such as immigration and refugee services, job training, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse and youth programs.

Source: Congressional Briefing on VISTA, March 1993

ACTION pays VISTA Volunteers a monthly subsistence allowance which averages $620 in the continental U.S.[2] The monthly allowances range from $559 to $678 in the continental U.S. and are $705 and $732 in Hawaii and Alaska, respectively. At the end of their service, VISTA Volunteers receive an end-of-service stipend of $95 for each month of active service. ACTION also provides comprehensive health coverage for VISTA Volunteers during their service period on a self-insured basis.

PROGRAM SCOPE

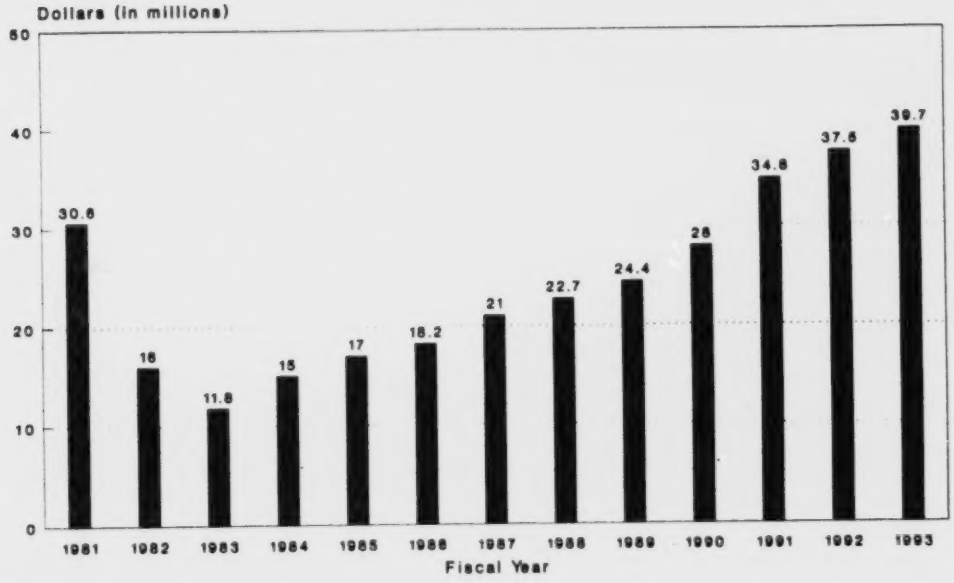
Level of Funding

VISTA's funds are allocated by Congress through the ACTION appropriation. Since 1983, VISTA's annual allocation has grown from $11.8 million to $39.7 million. Figure 1.1 shows VISTA's budget history from 1981 through 1993. The figure depicts consistent yearly funding increases since 1984 following major declines in 1982 and 1983. Volunteer service year levels have remained constant since Fiscal Year 1991.

The average cost per Volunteer in Fiscal Year 1993 is $15,337. This figure includes direct VISTA costs per Volunteer ($11,837) and ACTION's administrative costs per Volunteer ($3,500). (See Figure 1.2 for a breakdown of VISTA program costs per Volunteer.)

[2]This subsistence allowance, by legislative mandate, must average 105% of the national poverty rate for a single individual.

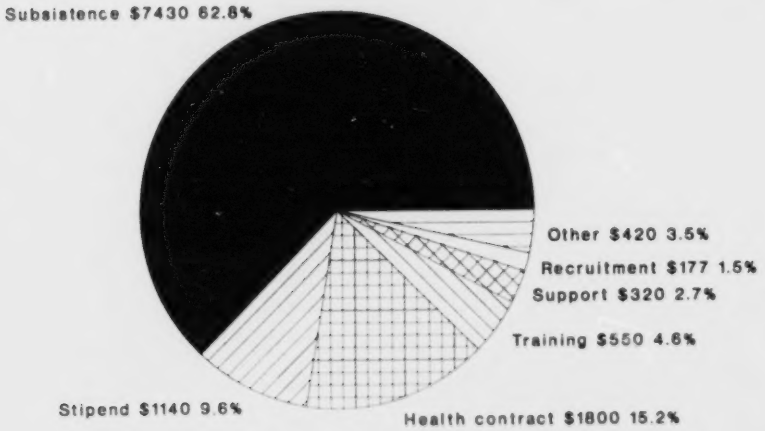
FIGURE 1.1
VISTA's Budget History



1987-93 includes Literacy Corps
Source: ACTION Office of Policy, Research and Evaluation, 1993

FIGURE 1.2
VISTA Program Costs Per Volunteer Fiscal Year 1993 (Est.)

* Total = $11,837



* Excludes ACTION's costs
Source: ACTION Office of Policy, Research and Evaluation, 1993

Number of Projects and Volunteers

The number of VISTA projects and Volunteers varies with the funding levels. In 1980, 4,478 VISTA Volunteers were working in 990 projects nationwide. At the end of January 1993, approximately 3,400 Volunteers were serving in 775 VISTA projects. The number of active Volunteers, however, does not convey the number of individuals serving in VISTA for an entire year.

A more accurate portrayal of Volunteers in service is given by Volunteer Service Years (VSYs). A VSY represents one, or any combination of VISTA Volunteers serving a total of 12 months in a single fiscal year. For example, two Volunteers working for six months equals one VSY. The number of VSYs in 1980 was 3,982 and, in 1981, 4,208 (see Figure 1.3). The number of VSYs was reduced by 47% in 1982 to 2,227. Since dropping to its lowest point in 1983 (1,728), the number of VSYs has increased by approximately 200 VSYs each year until 1991 and has remained at virtually the same level since 1991--approximately 3,370 per year.

Equally important as the number of VISTA Volunteers is how long Volunteers are choosing to serve. A recent study of Volunteer completion rates revealed that more Volunteers are completing their year of service today than they did in the past (81% in Fiscal Year 1991) (see Figure 1.4) and more than one-half are extending their one-year enlistment into a second year of service.

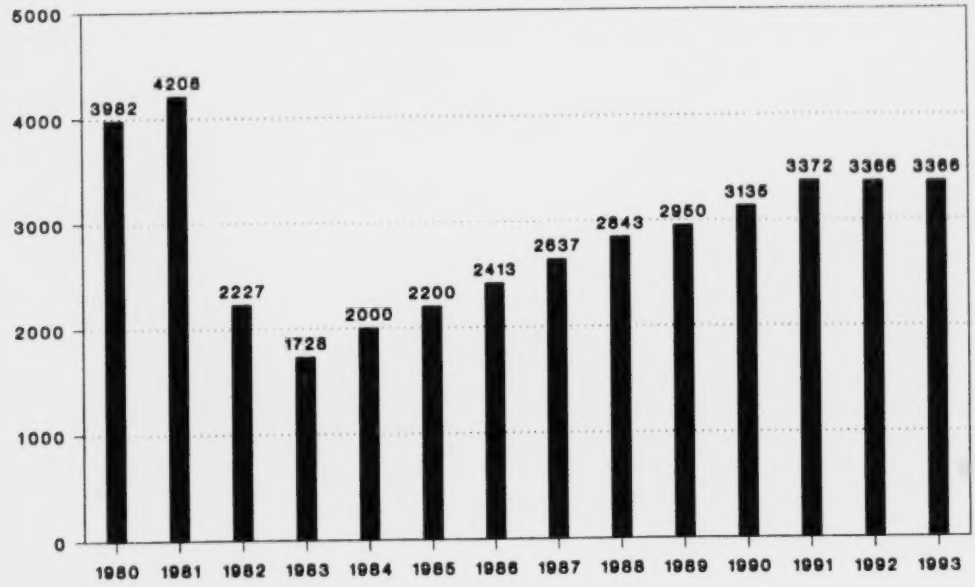
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Focus

The evaluation focused on six fundamental questions:

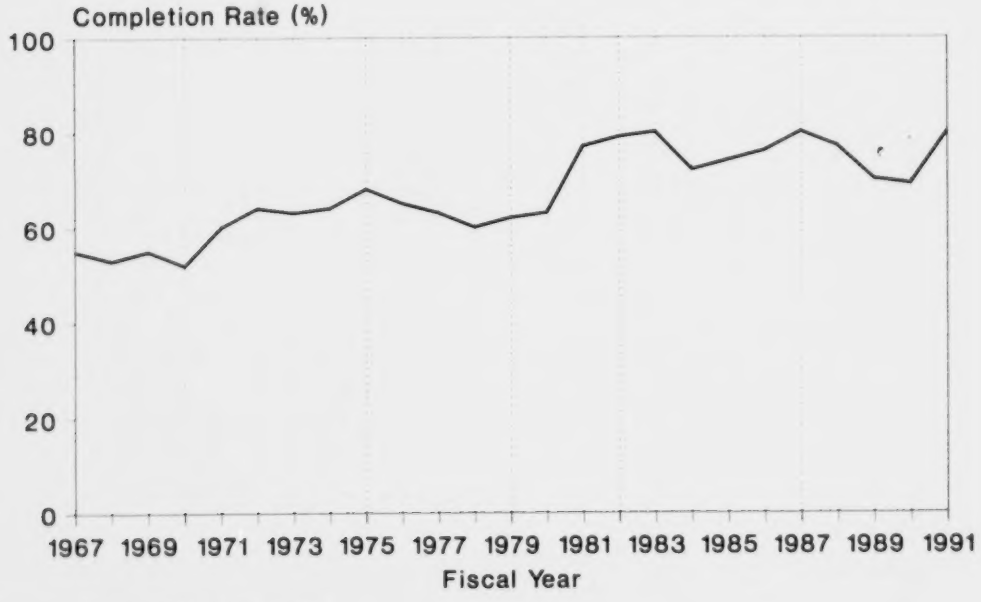
1. Are VISTA Volunteers addressing the needs of low-income communities?
2. What project and VISTA Volunteer characteristics support a successful Volunteer experience?
3. What benefits accrue to Volunteers as a result of their experience as a VISTA Volunteer?
4. What benefits accrue to low-income communities as a result of receiving the temporary support of a VISTA project?
5. How successful are the resource mobilization practices of VISTA sponsors and projects?
6. Are sponsors able to sustain VISTA initiatives after VISTA funding ends?

FIGURE 1.3
VISTA Volunteer Service Years



1987-93 includes Literacy Corps
Source: ACTION Office of Policy, Research and Evaluation, 1993

FIGURE 1.4
VISTA 12-Month Completion Rates 1967-91



Source: Action Office of Policy Research and Evaluation, 1993

To answer these questions, the evaluation established four goals:

- Provide an overall description of the VISTA program, including numbers of persons served, strategies for improving service, Volunteer activities and project outcomes;
- Determine the degree to which VISTA is meeting the objectives set forth in its legislative mandates;
- Address the strengths and weaknesses of VISTA based on data analysis and selected site visits; and
- Recommend appropriate program and policy changes.

Research Methods

We collected data through site visits and mail and telephone surveys. For the site visits, we utilized rapid appraisal techniques at 20 VISTA projects in five ACTION regions. We selected the sites in coordination with the ACTION Office of Policy, Research and Evaluation. The sites represented project types that reflect programmatic areas of interest to ACTION. Each site visit lasted approximately a full day and consisted of interviews with the VISTA Project Supervisor, VISTA Volunteers, and members of the local community (e.g., advisory board members, representatives of the sponsor's board of directors, local government representatives and other community residents). The main purpose of the site visits was to gather general information on the operation of VISTA projects and to obtain feedback on preliminary survey materials.

In addition to the site visits, we conducted mail and telephone surveys between November 1992 and mid-February 1993.[3] VISTA provided a list of the 650 current VISTA projects from which projects were identified. Adopting a proportional-stratified sampling technique, we used three sampling strata for selecting the sites surveyed: the number of VISTA Volunteers at each site, the location of the site (urban or rural) and the age of the site (see Table 1.3). We then sent questionnaires to 272 current VISTA Supervisors, 1,250 VISTA Volunteers, 222 former VISTA Supervisors, and 750 community members identified by the VISTA Supervisors. We completed our survey (primarily with former VISTA Supervisors and community members) by telephone. The response rate for each of the four groups surveyed by mail and/or telephone is shown in Table 1.4.

[3]VISTA Literacy Corps projects were excluded from the survey because they were evaluated in 1991.

TABLE 1.3
SAMPLING STRATA USED TO SELECT VISTA SITES

Number of Volunteers at Site (Percent of Sites Surveyed)	Urbanization (Percent of Sites Surveyed)	Age of Site (Percent of Sites Surveyed)
1 to 3 (55%) 4 to 6 (29%) 7 + (16%)	Rural (55%)* Urban (45%)*	6 mo.-2 yrs (57%) 2 yrs. + (43%)

* Urban is defined as 50,000 inhabitants or more. Urban/rural percentages are for the actual distribution of the sites; when adjusted by the number of VISTA Volunteers serving in these sites, 60% of the VISTA Volunteers are located in urban sites and 40% are serving in rural sites.

TABLE 1.4
VISTA SURVEY RESPONSE RATE BY RESPONDENT GROUP

Survey Group	Number Sampled	Number Responding	Percent Responding
VISTA Volunteers	1,250	803	64%
Current VISTA Supervisors	272	239	88%
Former VISTA Supervisors	222	192	87%
Community members	750	642	86%

We coded and entered all the survey responses into four data files: VISTA Volunteers, current VISTA Supervisors, former VISTA Supervisors and community members. We then conducted three analyses of these data files to:

- Describe the overall features of each group surveyed;
- Compare types of projects and VISTA Volunteer characteristics; and
- Determine through relational tests which factors predict the effectiveness of Volunteers and projects.

In addition, we analyzed the qualitative data collected during the 20 site visits to gain additional insight on the quantitative findings. The qualitative data provided a valuable frame of reference for interpreting the survey responses and generating final conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO:
DESCRIPTION OF VISTA VOLUNTEERS, COMMUNITIES AND SPONSORS

All VISTA projects consist of three components: VISTA Volunteers, the community served and the sponsoring organization. In this chapter we answer the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of VISTA Volunteers and do these reflect the objectives of the VISTA program?
- How are VISTA Volunteers recruited and trained?
- What are the characteristics of the communities VISTA Volunteers serve?
- What are the characteristics of the sponsoring organization?

The answers to these questions are based on the responses to our mail and telephone surveys: 803 responses from VISTA Volunteers, 239 responses from current VISTA Supervisors, 192 responses from former VISTA Supervisors, and 642 responses from community members.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VISTA VOLUNTEERS

VISTA Volunteers provide direct and indirect services to local communities through sponsoring organizations. In the evaluation survey, Volunteers described their characteristics, activities, concerns, attitudes and effects. Their responses provide informative views of the VISTA experience. The median length of service of a current VISTA Volunteer is one year.

The characteristics of VISTA Volunteers are given in Table 2.1. Comparison with the data from a 1980 VISTA evaluation reveals that:

- Female Volunteers continue to account for about three-fourths of all VISTA Volunteers;
- The number of nationally recruited VISTA Volunteers has declined;
- The percentage of Hispanic and Puerto Rican VISTA Volunteers has increased;
- The educational levels of VISTA Volunteers have increased; and
- The median age of VISTA Volunteers has increased.

TABLE 2.1
VISTA VOLUNTEER CHARACTERISTICS

	1980 EVALUATION (N=891)	1992 EVALUATION (N=803)
Sex	**Percent**	**Percent**
Female	71%	77%
Male	29%	23%
Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3%	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2%	3%
Black, but not of Hispanic origin	27%	23%
Hispanic and Puerto Rican	8%	12%
White, but not of Hispanic origin	61%	58%
Multiracial	--	2%
Education		
Less than high school	12%	6%
High school	19%	17%
Some college	23%	34%
College graduate	37%	29%
Graduate school	9%	14%
Volunteer Type		
Local	73%	81%
National	27%	19%
Median Age	29 Years	36 Years

Source: 1992 data, VISTA Volunteers; 1980 data, Volunteers in Service to America: 1980 Activities and Outcomes Survey, ACTION, 1981

Volunteer Recruitment

The recruitment of VISTA Volunteers is an extremely important activity for both the sponsor and ACTION. Sponsors spend considerable time recruiting Volunteers. VISTA Volunteers are recruited in two ways: from the local community or by referral from ACTION to the sponsor. In 1980, slightly more than one-fourth (27%) of all VISTA Volunteers were recruited nationally; today, this figure is 19%.

Most VISTA Volunteers (81%) are recruited within their local community and have lived there an average of 13 years. For VISTA Volunteers living outside the community in which they work, their daily commuting distance round trip averages 19 miles.

Whether recruited locally or from outside the community, VISTA Volunteers share similar reasons for becoming Volunteers. In their responses, the Volunteers indicated that the most important reasons for becoming a VISTA Volunteer are to:

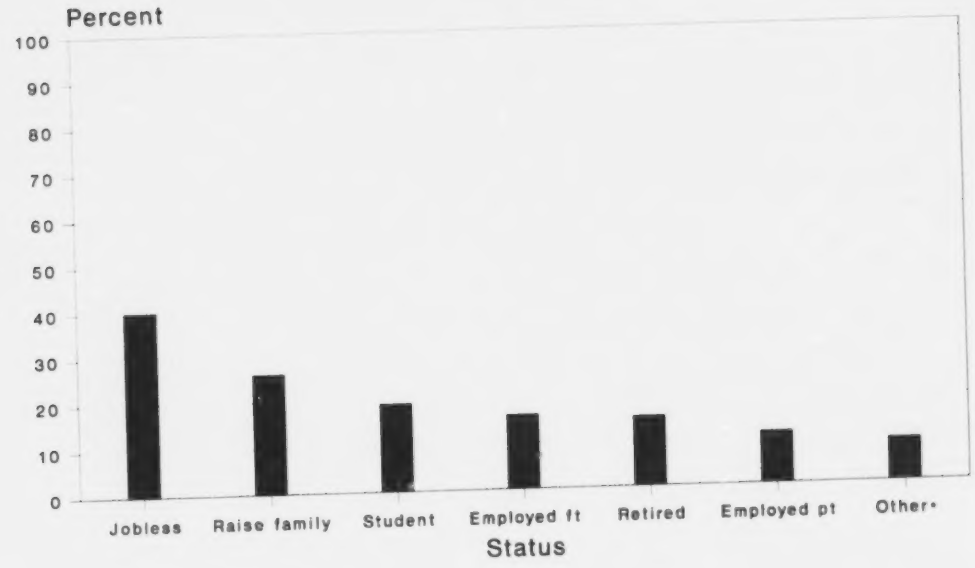
- Serve and improve their community (86%); and
- Gain employment experience (13%).

Few Volunteers appear to have joined VISTA simply to obtain a job or some type of training. Nevertheless, availability appears to play a role in the recruitment process. The most logical prospects for VISTA Volunteer positions are persons who are not already established on a career path or who are between jobs. Figure 2.1 shows that before joining VISTA most Volunteers were unemployed, students, retired or employed part-time.

Most VISTA Volunteers said they had the educational background (65%) and experience (70%) to qualify for service with their sponsoring organization. This finding underscores the fact that VISTA is basically not a job-training or employment program, although many (40%) Volunteers do receive these benefits.

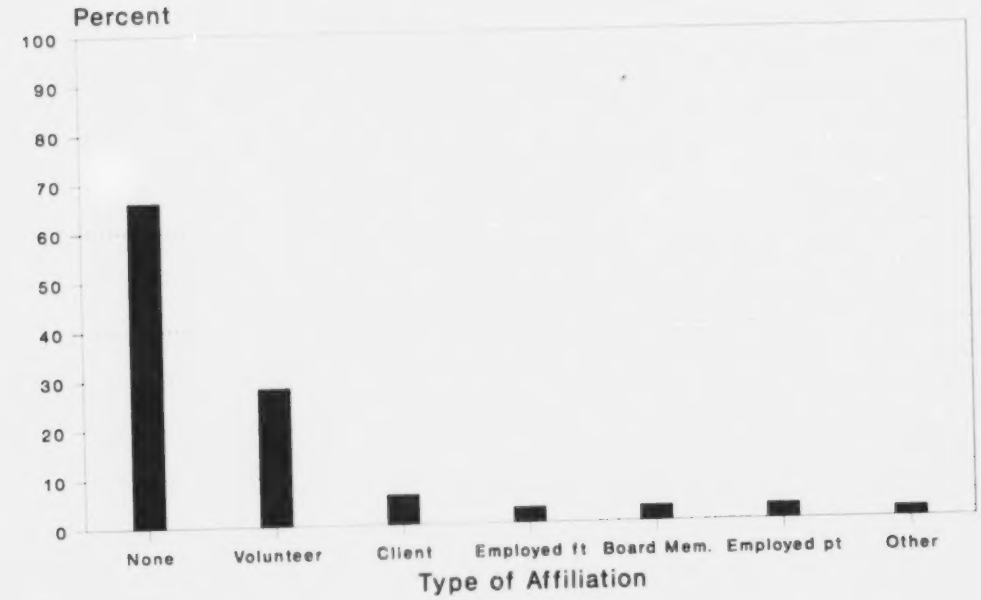
Most VISTA Volunteers (66%) stated that they had no previous affiliation with their sponsoring organization (see Figure 2.2). But sponsors do draw upon local volunteers and other personnel to obtain VISTA Volunteers. According to VISTA Supervisors, most VISTA Volunteers are recruited locally by word of mouth (82%). Other major methods of recruitment mentioned by Supervisors are newspaper advertisement (55%) and referrals from ACTION (48%). The full range of methods used to recruit VISTA Volunteers is displayed in Table 2.2. Despite the variety of methods used, 81% of the VISTA Volunteers reported being recruited by local sponsoring organizations.

FIGURE 2.1
VISTA Volunteers' Status Before Joining VISTA



• For example, respondents indicated they were volunteers, self-employed etc.

Figure 2.2
VISTA Volunteers' Affiliation with Sponsor Before Joining VISTA



•For example, students.

TABLE 2.2
METHODS USED TO RECRUIT VISTA VOLUNTEERS ACCORDING TO CURRENT VISTA SUPERVISORS

Method	Percent of Current VISTA Supervisors Using Method*
Word-of-mouth	82%
Newspaper advertisement	55%
Referral from ACTION	48%
Referral from other community groups	45%
Volunteer of organization	43%
Client of sponsoring organization	29%
Local campus recruitment	29%
Radio or television announcement	14%
Board member of organization	10%
Other	11%
Job placement office (4%)	
Church bulletin/flyers (3%)	
Government agencies (2%)	
Unspecified advertising (2%)	

*Column does not total 100% because respondents could choose more than one option.

Source: Current VISTA Supervisors, N=239

Volunteer Activities

VISTA Volunteers work a 40-hour week on average. Half of this work is performed on site at the sponsoring organization, and 33% of a Volunteer's time is spent in the local community with clients. VISTA Volunteers estimated that 10% of their time, on average, is spent traveling to their clients. The survey showed also that 55% of the VISTA Volunteers are involved in other community activities besides VISTA. These Volunteers spend an average of another six and one-half to nine hours each week working in local social service, civic or educational programs.

Figure 2.3 displays the frequency of specific activities performed by the Volunteers. Four activities were reported by 70% or more of the Volunteers: community outreach and public awareness (including development of outreach and promotional materials), recordkeeping, committee meetings or activities and volunteer recruitment. Ninety-seven percent of the VISTA Volunteers said they had the skills to perform the activities assigned by their sponsors. Example 2.1 illustrates a variety of tasks that VISTA Volunteers are performing in a multicultural youth program.

Volunteer Supervision

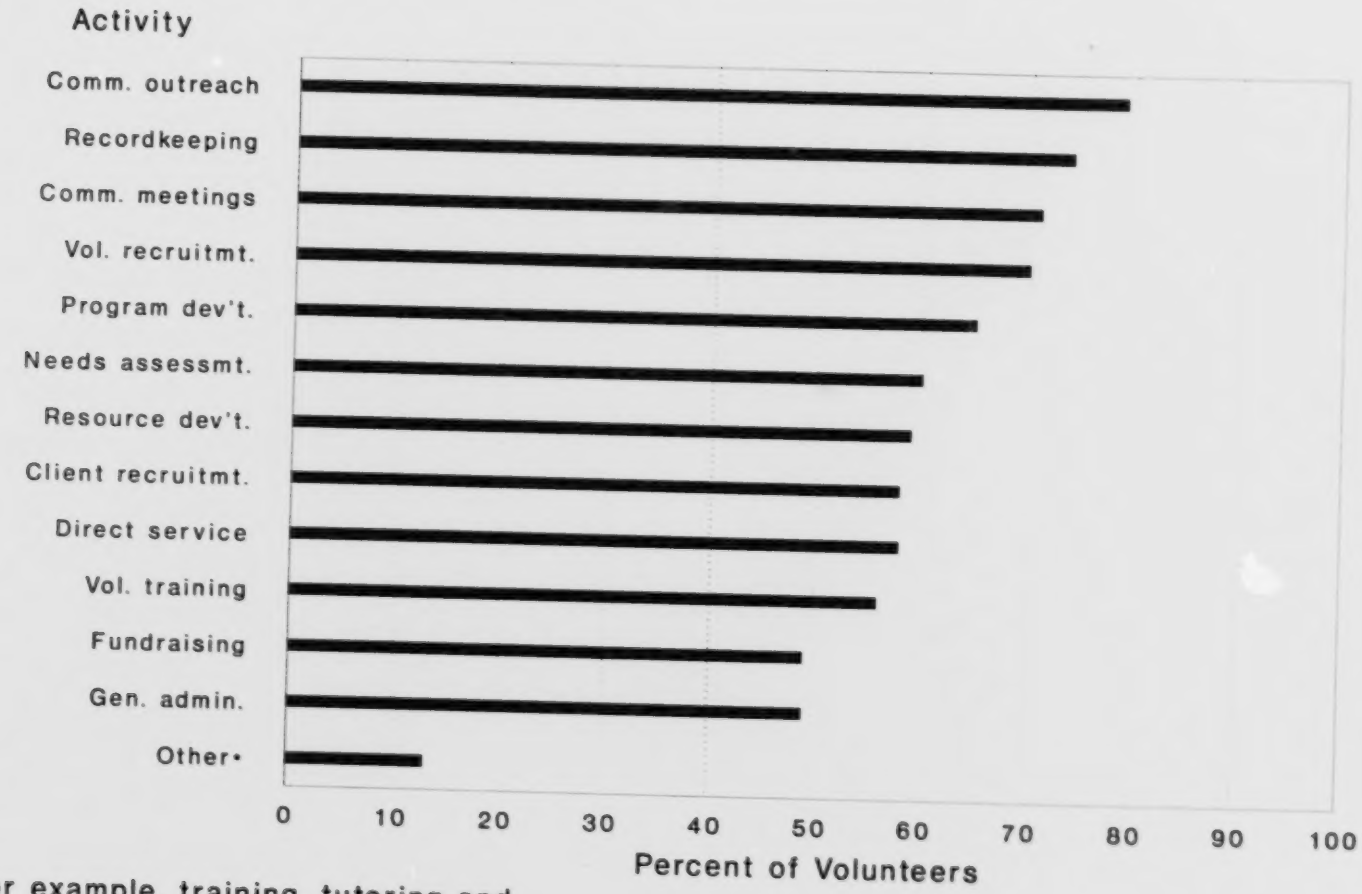
One of the primary requirements for a VISTA sponsoring organization is that it assumes responsibility for adequately supervising its assigned VISTA Volunteers. The survey responses received from VISTA Supervisors showed that 72% of them meet with their VISTA Volunteers daily or weekly while 6% meet with their Volunteers less than once a month. Seventy-seven percent of the Supervisors reported that they maintain daily or weekly telephone communication with their Volunteers. Sixty-four percent of the VISTA Volunteers who responded stated that they also meet daily or weekly with other Volunteers at their sites.

The VISTA Volunteers indicated that their immediate Supervisors average 23 hours a week at the VISTA project site. The Volunteers (88%) submit regular (usually monthly) activity reports to their VISTA Supervisor. Seventy-six percent said that they receive formal, written evaluations of their performance every three months.

Volunteer Training

All VISTA Volunteers are required to participate in a Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) on the goals of VISTA and administrative procedures. This PSO is conducted by personnel assigned to the ACTION state or regional offices. Seventy-nine percent of the Volunteers received their PSO at the regional level and the others received their PSO at state and local levels. Table 2.3 depicts the percentages of current VISTA Volunteers that received their PSO training at the various levels.

Figure 2.3
VISTA Volunteers' Activities



*For example, training, tutoring and "ad hoc" activities related to VISTA.

EXAMPLE 2.1
A MULTICULTURAL YOUTH PROGRAM: BOSTON

The Greater Boston Regional Youth Council of the Boston Housing Authority was organized 13 years ago. It is a multicultural council of young people that grew out of a coalition of neighborhood organizations serving youth in the Boston area. The youth coordinator for this project is a former VISTA Volunteer who was able to transform his VISTA position into a full-time, paid position with the housing authority. The council is comprised of 20 to 30 youth who meet in the afternoons after school. Since 1986, the council's activities have focused on development, especially, on the design and conduct of workshops addressing youth concerns, including teenage parenting, date rape, substance abuse, AIDS and cross-cultural issues.

Three VISTA Volunteers are assigned to work with the Youth Council. All were recruited from the local community, representing Irish, Puerto Rican and Vietnamese backgrounds. Two of the Volunteers are very active in organizing the activities of the council, engaging the youth who attend after school, encouraging other youth to participate and seeking additional volunteers. Prior to joining VISTA, they both participated in similar volunteer programs, working with community service organizations, summer camps and basketball leagues. The third Volunteer is most active in tutoring Vietnamese youth in the evening. She was introduced to VISTA through her brother who attended the council's summer program and has recruited five additional Vietnamese volunteers who reach out to Vietnamese families and provide tutoring for youth.

All of the Volunteers are dedicated to their work and have extended themselves to a previous VISTA site as well. Here, in a particularly troubled, low-income housing project, they work in the late afternoons and evenings to encourage youth from the project to participate in the project's teen center and in the council's activities.

The youth council, with the guidance of the Project Director and VISTA Volunteers, is trying to cope with, confront, and overcome the interpersonal and social issues that arise in poor, multicultural neighborhoods. The Project Director effectively combines a straightforward, directed and yet "hands-off" approach to bring out the best in the youth and the Volunteers. The VISTA Volunteers are central to this project. They have high visibility in the council and attend regular (monthly) board meetings. Importantly, they are dynamic, "mission-oriented," engaged and enthusiastic. They view their work as contributing to the integration of the community through development of youth and community understanding of issues related to racism and sexism. They are trying to create a solid base of activities and are hopeful that their projects will continue after VISTA funding ends.

TABLE 2.3
LOCATION OF VISTA PRE-SERVICE ORIENTATION

Location	Percent*
Regional PSO for VISTA Volunteers from several states	79%
State PSO for all VISTA Volunteers from one state	17%
Local community PSO for VISTA Volunteers on a project	3%

*Column does not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: VISTA Volunteers, N=803

Training is also provided by the sponsoring organizations. Ninety-two percent of the VISTA Volunteers said that they participated in an initial, three-day orientation provided by their sponsoring organization. This initial orientation focused on the goals and activities of the organization.

Volunteers also receive in-service training which may be provided by the sponsoring organization, ACTION, or both. Eighty-seven percent of the Volunteers indicated that they received five days of in-service training which consisted of direct training, conferences and workshops. Table 2.4 lists the major topics addressed during in-service training. Volunteers find this training very useful (see Table 2.5). Training that was rated most useful by the Volunteers related to the goals and activities of their sponsoring organizations and to public relations. Training that was rated least useful related to fundraising, career development and administrative activities. Volunteers gave higher ratings to the training received for activities that they perform most frequently.

VISTA Volunteers noted that they need additional training in areas such as community outreach techniques (28%) and improved office skills (13%). Sixteen percent of the Volunteers said that no further training is required in order for them to perform their assigned duties.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITIES VISTA VOLUNTEERS SERVE

The VISTA Supervisors and VISTA Volunteers reported that they primarily serve low-income groups and groups associated with poverty (see Figure 2.4). More than 40% of the respondents said their projects served youth, senior citizens, the unemployed and families in crisis. In Example 2.2, we present a description on the use of VISTA Volunteers in an immigration and refugee community center.

TABLE 2.4
MAJOR TOPICS OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING ACCORDING TO VISTA VOLUNTEERS

In-Service Training Topic	Percent of Training Provided By*		
	VISTA/ ACTION	Sponsoring Organization	Sponsoring Organization and ACTION
Recruitment of community volunteers	31%	28%	21%
Fundraising	29%	27%	15%
Communications/public relations (including development of outreach/promotional material)	26%	31%	24%
Career development	24%	21%	14%
Program administration/management	23%	32%	14%
Training of community volunteers	23%	36%	13%
Assessment of client needs	14%	49%	12%
Activities to be performed at the sponsoring organization	14%	50%	17%
Goals and objectives of the sponsoring organization	12%	55%	17%
Content area of project	10%	49%	9%
Other**	1%	3%	1%

*Columns do not total 100% because respondents could choose more than one option; rows do not total 100% because of non-responses.
**For example, networking and tutoring.

Source: VISTA Volunteers, N=803

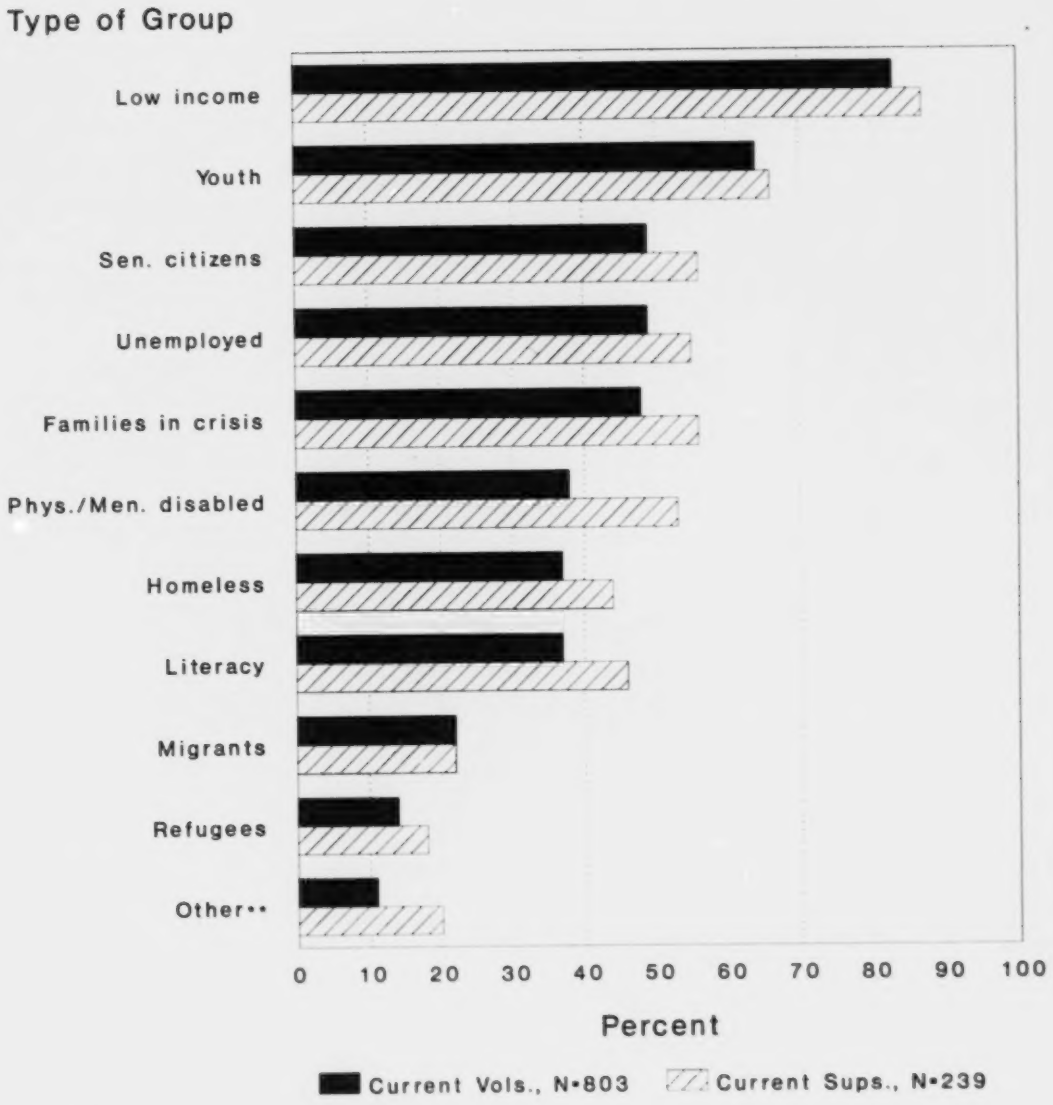
TABLE 2.5
USEFULNESS OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING ACCORDING TO VISTA VOLUNTEERS

Usefulness	Training Activity	Percent of Volunteers
Most* Useful	Goals and objectives of the sponsoring organization	77%
	Activities to be performed at the sponsoring organization	75%
	Communications/public relations (including development of out-reach/promotional material)	71%
	Assessment of client needs	67%
	Recruitment of community volunteers	66%
	Content area of project	60%
	Training of community volunteers	60%
	Program administration/management	57%
	Fundraising	51%
	Career development	48%
	Other***	5%
Least** Useful	Fundraising	18%
	Career development	17%
	Project administration/management	16%
	Training of community volunteers	14%
	Recruitment of community volunteers	13%
	Content area of project	12%
	Communications/public relations (including development of out-reach/promotional material)	11%
	Activities to be performed at the sponsoring organization	10%
	Goals and objectives of the sponsoring organization	9%
	Assessment of client needs	9%
	Other***	2%

*"Most Useful" represents the combined responses of "useful" and "very useful."
**"Least Useful" represents the combined responses of "somewhat useful" and "not useful."
***For example, community issues and tutoring.

Source: VISTA Volunteers, N=803

FIGURE 2.4
Type of Groups Served by VISTA Projects*



*Total >100% due to multiple choices.
**For example, HIV populations; abused; pregnant/new mothers; and inmates.

EXAMPLE 2.2
IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES

Four VISTA Volunteers are working with Catholic Charities and Immigration Services in Boston. Catholic Charities is a large, centrally located, well-organized institution that has provided a variety of community and refugee services in Boston and elsewhere since World War II. In Boston, it responds to the needs of 600 refugees arriving each year, one-half of whom arrive with refugee status and one-half of whom arrive with immigrant (political, humanitarian) status. Most of the recent immigrants are Vietnamese, Ethiopians, Liberians, Somalians, Eastern Europeans. Haitians and Central Americans.

VISTA Volunteers have been involved in Catholic Charities' refugee and immigration services program for the past three years. They primarily work on refugee resettlement and recruitment of additional volunteers from the local community. Each year, she has received approval for additional Volunteers. The Volunteers work as a team, combining organization and communication skills learned in college with the bilingual and community-access capabilities of local residents. One of the Volunteers, a college graduate who was recruited nationally, is working with a local Vietnamese college student to develop mentors for a local Amerasian community. They recruit and train local volunteers who recruit local Amerasians to participate in monthly outings. Two Volunteers, an older Vietnamese refugee and another college graduate recruited nationally, are organizing English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for new refugees (adult learners) and assisting refugees in obtaining green cards. They are also identifying local volunteers to teach the ESL classes. The fourth Volunteer is organizing a free food project and teaching ESL in a local community of 30,000 Cambodians and other Asians (the second largest community of Cambodians outside Cambodia).

All of the Volunteers are engaged in outreach activities, and three are establishing programs and recruiting local volunteers to continue the project after VISTA support ends. One of the Volunteers is writing grant proposals to solicit funds from private industry to expand the program. Together, these Volunteers are making a difference in many individuals' lives, helping immigrants and refugees settle in the United States and become productive citizens. In turn, they are experiencing the satisfaction of helping others "get on their feet" and finding unexpected fulfillment in community service. This program demonstrates the effectiveness of combining local and nationally recruited Volunteers into teams that offer organizational skills and access to community residents.

The VISTA Supervisors described the communities being served as outlined in Table 2.6. Most of the people served by VISTA (71%) have family incomes that are at or below the poverty level (defined as $12,674 for a family of four by the U.S. Bureau of the Census). Sixty percent of those served are receiving public assistance. In addition, the communities have an average unemployment rate of 10% or higher (the 1991-92 national unemployment rate was 7.4%); 20% of the households in poverty (the 1991-92 average national poverty rate was 12%); and 37% of the adults have less than a 9th-grade education. Both VISTA Volunteers and VISTA Supervisors reported that they are working with low-income groups (83% and 95%, respectively).

To corroborate the information reported by the VISTA Supervisors, we analyzed census data to ascertain the level of poverty in the communities served. This analysis showed that an average of 17% of the households served by VISTA are at or below the poverty level (see Table 2.7). This percentage is consistent for rural and urban VISTA sites and almost matches the 20% reported by the VISTA Supervisors.

We also surveyed 642 community members to gain insight on the level of support for the VISTA project within the communities served. Community members are overwhelmingly supportive (61%) of the efforts of VISTA Volunteers (see Figure 2.5), although 18% of the respondents said that they are unaware of VISTA or do not know about the VISTA activities.

Community members reported that they have lived in the communities served by VISTA from one to 87 years (for a median of 19 years). Many of the community members (43%) stated that they have no affiliation with the organization sponsoring the VISTA project, although most (59%) are members of the organization's board of directors or advisory council. Sponsoring organizations are required to have advisory councils which must be composed mainly of low-income community members when the board of directors lacks these representatives.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

VISTA sponsoring organizations may be Federal, state or local agencies or private, non-profit organizations that are committed to solving problems directly related to the conditions of poverty. Sponsors are responsible for the local management of VISTA Volunteers. They also must ensure that each VISTA project includes the active participation of other community elements, that resources are being mobilized, and that the community can continue the VISTA initiative after VISTA funding ends.

TABLE 2.6
PROFILE OF COMMUNITIES SERVED BY VISTA PROJECTS ACCORDING TO VISTA SUPERVISORS

Community Characteristic	Mean Percent of Clients
Ethnic Groups*	
Hispanic and Puerto Rican	14%
Black, but not of Hispanic origin	36%
White, but not of Hispanic origin	42%
Asian or Pacific Islander	5%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	4%
Age Categories	
10 years old or less	14%
11 through 17 years old	17%
18 through 25 years old	16%
26 through 45 years old	27%
46 through 60 years old	14%
61 years old or more	12%
Other Characteristics	
Families at or below the poverty level	71%
Families receiving public assistance	60%
Unemployment rate	10%
Percent of households living in poverty	20%
Percent of adults with less than a 9th-grade education	37%

*Column does not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Current VISTA Supervisors, N=239

TABLE 2.7
POVERTY LEVELS IN COMMUNITIES SERVED BY VISTA

Urbanization	Number of Sites (N=166)*	Service Area Population	Percent of Population in Poverty	Estimated Population in Poverty
Rural (< 50,000 residents)	82	1,574,597	16%	256,451
Urban (50,000-300,000 residents)	56	7,591,892	16%	1,237,973
Urban/Metro (> 300,000 residents)	28	31,403,473	17%	5,463,076

*The number of sites reflects cities for which data are available; multiple projects in a given city are reported as one site.

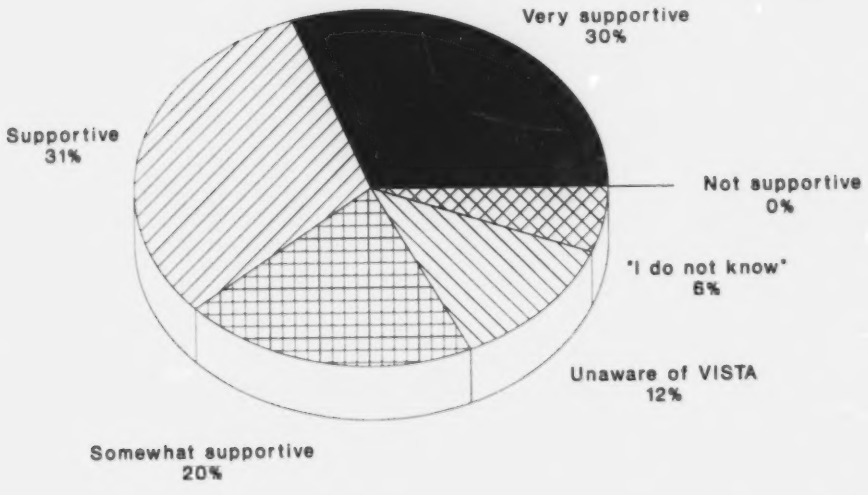
Source: Summaries of Income and Poverty Status, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990

Current and Former Project Supervisors

VISTA Supervisors have spent considerable time working for the VISTA sponsoring organization. Current Supervisors average four and one-half years with the organization, and 85% are full-time employees. Former Supervisors have spent a median of six years working for the sponsoring organization and 89% still work for the organization. The median length of service as a VISTA Supervisor is 27 months for former Supervisors and 17 months for current Supervisors. Sixty-eight percent of the former Supervisors and 79% of the current Supervisors stated that they had been involved in writing the proposal for the VISTA project.

Current Supervisors (91%) reported that their salary is primarily paid by the sponsoring organization; 7% receive a partial salary from a VISTA salary grant; 1% receive their total salary from VISTA; and 2% are unpaid volunteers. Current Supervisors average 26 hours a week on the VISTA project, and most have prior education (75%) and/or experience (91%) in the program area addressed by the project.

FIGURE 2.5
Level of Community Support by Community Members*



*Percent does not total 100% because of rounding.

Sponsoring Organizations

Relatively few of the sponsoring organizations are new to social service programs. These organizations have a median of 15 years of experience in this field, as reported by current VISTA Supervisors (14 years as reported by former Supervisors). The median number of full-time staff at these organizations is six, and the median number of part-time staff is two. The median budget of a sponsoring organization is $300,000.

Based on the responses of VISTA Supervisors and former VISTA Supervisors, the median number of VISTA Volunteers authorized at VISTA sites is four. The median number of current VISTA Volunteers and the average number of Volunteers over the life of a project are also four. The median number of community volunteers is 85. The ranges for some of these data are presented in Table 2.8.

TABLE 2.8
PROFILE OF VISTA PROJECT SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

Characteristic	Median	Range
Full-time staff	6	0-5500
Part-time staff	2	0-250
Current number of VISTA volunteers	4	0-21
Community volunteers	85	0-9000
Age of organization	15	1-99

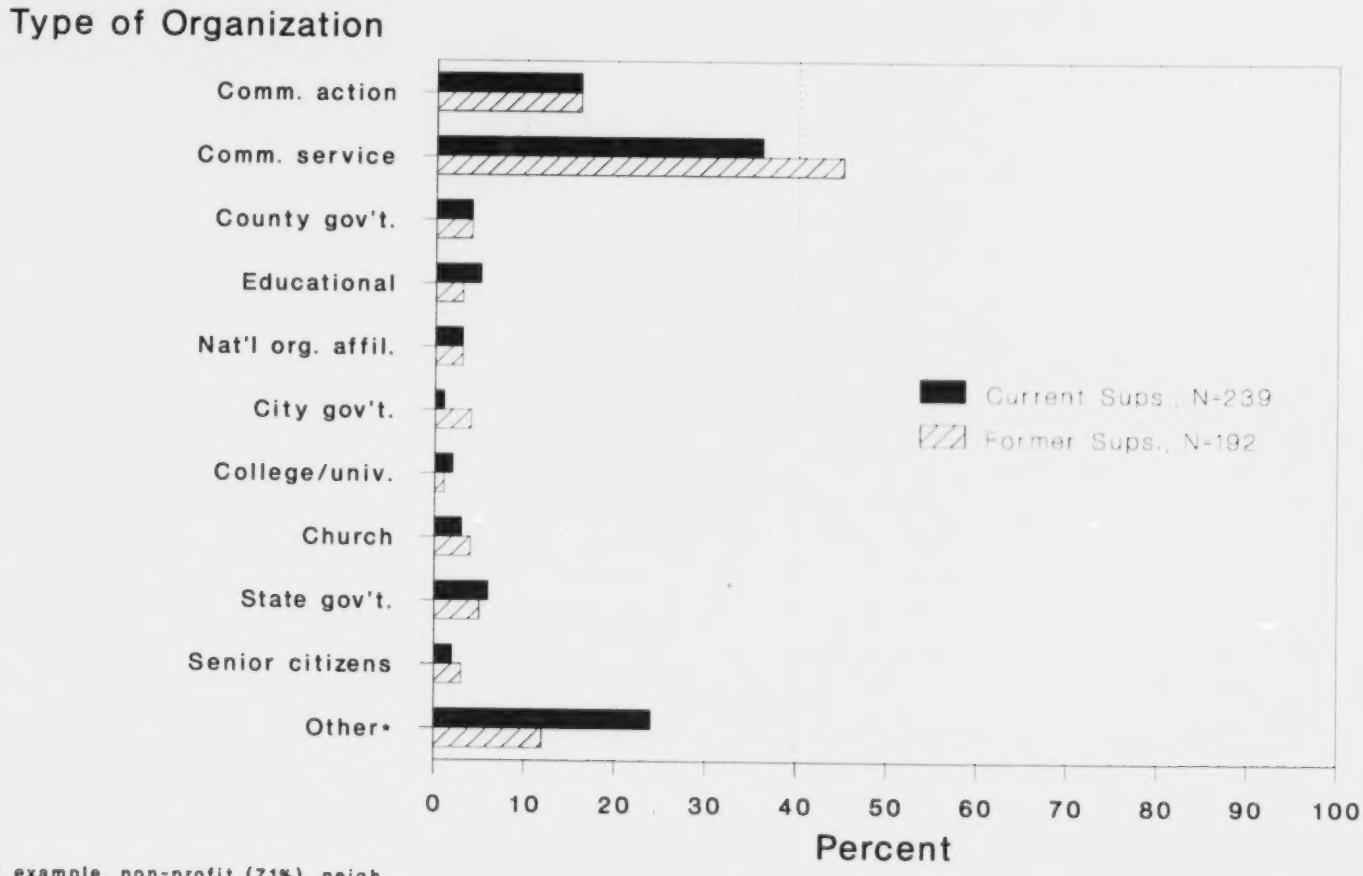
Source: Current VISTA Supervisors, N=239

Figure 2.6 depicts the type of organizations that sponsor VISTA projects (see also Table 1.1). Both Table 1.1 and Figure 2.6 reveal that the most frequent sponsors are private, non-profit and community action and service organizations.

All of the sponsoring organizations have boards of directors, and 60% have advisory councils. In most of these organizations the board of directors assists in planning and fundraising. When the membership of the board of directors is noticeably different from the composition of the local communities served by the VISTA project, Section 106 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 requires that, to the maximum extent practicable, the people of the communities participate in the planning, development and implementation of the VISTA project. Sponsoring organizations, in accordance with ACTION guidelines, establish advisory groups that include a substantial membership of potential project beneficiaries.[1] In other words, local community members must play a role in each VISTA project.

[1]Potential sponsors that already have an established governing, policy or advisory group of which at least 50% is composed of the beneficiary population are not required to establish a separate advisory group for the VISTA project (VISTA Handbook for Volunteers and Sponsors, 1990, p.7).

FIGURE 2.6
Type of Sponsoring Organization



•For example, non-profit (71%), neigh. housing (16%), or health service organization (13%).

As defined by ACTION regulation, the project advisory group has the following responsibilities:

- To the extent practical, assist the sponsor in the initial planning of a new project proposal and in the planning of a continuation project application;
- Review and provide written comment on the VISTA project application before it is submitted to ACTION. A copy of the advisory group's comments shall accompany each application to ACTION;
- Meet with the sponsoring organization's staff at least twice per project year to review and comment on the development and implementation of the project; and
- Submit, if it chooses, written reports and copies of minutes of its meetings to the sponsor to accompany the sponsor's completed ACTION Form A-1023, the "Project Progress Report."

Table 2.9 lists the types of activities in which the advisory councils and boards of directors participate in relation to the VISTA project. Sixty-eight percent of the current VISTA Supervisors reported that the board of directors of their organization meets monthly; 58% reported that the organization's advisory council meets less frequently, at quarterly or six-month intervals.

Project Activities

Current VISTA Supervisors noted that the VISTA Volunteers are participating in a wide variety of activities. Table 2.10 lists the primary and secondary activities of the organizations in which VISTA Volunteers work, as reported by VISTA Volunteers and current VISTA Supervisors. The main areas of increased effort by VISTA Volunteers, according to current Supervisors, are community planning/organization, literacy and education.

Current Supervisors reported that the VISTA projects require additional effort on their part to manage and coordinate the resources available within their communities. Table 2.11 lists the ways in which Supervisors strive to coordinate the VISTA project with other community activities supported by their organizations. VISTA Supervisors refer clients regularly (86%) to other community organizations and receive referrals (82%) from them. They also meet regularly (77%) with other organizations to discuss client needs and to plan projects.

TABLE 2.9
ACTIVITIES OF ADVISORY COUNCILS AND BOARDS OF DIRECTORS ACCORDING TO CURRENT VISTA SUPERVISORS

Activity	Advisory Council*	Board of Directors*
Assists in development of VISTA project proposal(s)	36%	31%
Reviews VISTA project application(s)	29%	44%
Reviews VISTA project implementation and operations	51%	70%
Submits written reports to the sponsor	18%	5%
Assists in VISTA project operations	39%	36%
Other**	11%	14%

*Columns do not total 100% because respondents could choose more than one option.
**Main activities by rank include outreach, fundraising, project development and youth and childcare.

Source: Current VISTA Supervisors, N=239

SUMMARY

Characteristics of VISTA Volunteers

- The majority of Volunteers are female.
- The percentage of Hispanic and Puerto Rican Volunteers has increased since 1980.
- The education levels of Volunteers have increased.
- The most important reasons Volunteers became VISTA Volunteers are to serve their community and obtain employment experience.
- Volunteers perform a variety of tasks, although community planning and organization and education are mentioned more frequently than other activities.
- Volunteers receive training in a variety of activities; emphasis is given to the activities and goals of sponsoring organizations.

TABLE 2.10
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ACTIVITIES OF SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS VISTA PROJECTS*

Activity	According to VISTA Volunteers (N=803)•		According to Current VISTA Supervisors (N=239)•	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Community planning and organization	38%	15%	30%	25%
Education	34%	20%	27%	17%
Literacy	28%	15%	27%	8%
Substance abuse	14%	15%	8%	11%
Housing	13%	19%	11%	8%
Economic development	12%	20%	11%	11%
Job development	12%	19%	8%	10%
Health/nutrition	12%	17%	7%	12%
Homelessness/shelter	12%	17%	10%	10%
Hunger	12%	17%	8%	10%
Child abuse and neglect	11%	17%	7%	10%
Mental health/counseling	9%	18%	5%	10%
Domestic violence	9%	18%	5%	9%
Vocational education	8%	19%	5%	8%
Energy and environmental	6%	16%	2%	6%
Runaway youth	5%	18%	4%	7%
Refugees	3%	19%	3%	4%
Other activities**	18%	6%	26%	4%

*Columns do not total 100% because respondents could choose more than one option; rows do not total 100% because of non-responses.
**For example, referral social services, volunteer recruitment.

TABLE 2.11
COORDINATION OF VISTA PROJECTS WITH OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ACCORDING TO CURRENT VISTA SUPERVISORS

Coordination Effort	Percent of Current VISTA Supervisors Reporting (N=239)*
Receives referrals of clients from other organizations (e.g., community agencies, employers, churches)	82%
Refers clients to other organizations	86%
Meets regularly with other organizations to discuss client needs and plan projects	77%
Transfers projects/activities to other organizations	40%
Assumes projects/activities from other organizations	38%
Trains staff or volunteers jointly with other organizations	59%
Provides volunteers to other organizations	44%
Receives volunteers from other organizations	61%
Provides technical assistance to other organizations	66%
Receives technical assistance from other organizations	61%
Other**	11%

*Column does not total 100% because respondents could choose more than one option.
**For example, joint projects.

Characteristics of Communities VISTA Volunteers Serve

- Most of the communities served by VISTA are at or below the poverty level and have high rates of unemployment.
- Communities served by VISTA are fairly evenly distributed between rural and urban sites.
- Communities served by VISTA are very supportive of the efforts of VISTA Volunteers.

Characteristics of Sponsoring Organizations

- Most of the sponsoring organizations have had prior involvement in social service programs.

- Most of the sponsoring organizations are private, non-profit community action and service organizations, although other types of sponsoring organizations (e.g., church-affiliated; state, county or local governments; educational institutions) are participating in VISTA.

- Current VISTA Supervisors report that they rely on the services and skills of community volunteers in order to operate their programs.

- All of the sponsoring organizations have boards of directors, and 60% have advisory councils.

- Sponsoring organizations perform a variety of activities that relate to the VISTA projects, including community planning and organization, economic development and education.

CHAPTER THREE:
OUTCOMES OF VISTA PROJECTS

In this chapter, we present and discuss the outcomes for VISTA Volunteers and the communities and sponsoring organizations served by VISTA. These findings are based on an analysis of the survey responses received from VISTA Volunteers, current and former VISTA Supervisors, and community members.

OUTCOMES FOR VISTA VOLUNTEERS

We examined two outcomes for VISTA Volunteers:

- Perceived benefits to the Volunteers from participating in VISTA; and
- Perceived success of the Volunteers in performing VISTA activities.

Benefits to VISTA Volunteers

In the survey, we asked VISTA Supervisors and community members to list and describe the benefits of the local VISTA project for the VISTA Volunteers. Similarly, we asked VISTA Volunteers to describe how they benefitted personally from serving in the VISTA program.

Four major categories of Volunteer benefits emerged. Table 3.1 shows the four categories and the percentage of each group responding which cited a given category as being a primary benefit for the Volunteers.

TABLE 3.1
PRIMARY BENEFITS TO VISTA VOLUNTEERS ACCORDING TO VISTA VOLUNTEERS, SUPERVISORS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Benefit to VISTA Volunteers	Percent of Respondent Group Selecting Benefit Category		
	VISTA Volunteers	Current Supervisors	Community Members
Satisfaction	41%	5%	25%
Career development	34%	49%	10%
Community awareness	22%	31%	48%
Job-Related Benefits	2%	15%	16%

Source: VISTA Volunteers, N=772; current VISTA Supervisors, N=227; community members, N=554

Each of the four categories is defined as follows:

- Satisfaction: VISTA Volunteers gain personal satisfaction from serving low-income communities by helping community members in need.

- Career Development: Through their VISTA work experience, networking and on-the-job training, VISTA Volunteers develop additional professional skills and knowledge which enhance their employability.

- Community Awareness: By working in low-income communities, VISTA Volunteers enhance their awareness of the issues, problems and needs of local communities and develop better understanding of diverse community groups.

- Job-Related Benefits: VISTA Volunteers benefit from the allowances and health insurance provided by the VISTA program.

As Table 3.1 shows, VISTA Volunteers most often considered personal satisfaction the primary benefit of their participation in VISTA, whereas VISTA Supervisors most often reported career development as the primary benefit for Volunteers. Community members considered community awareness the major primary benefit. Financial support and health insurance provided through Volunteer stipends were cited less often as a benefit of participating in VISTA.

The following comments by Volunteers illustrate these benefits:

"My education has been a plus to my work and I certainly plan to continue. I have been able to assist in education for adults and children."

"[VISTA has been] a very positive experience which allowed me to become involved professionally in a project I was especially interested in. [I] have since become the full-time, salaried director."

"I have had a wonderful experience as a VISTA [Volunteer]. The contacts, opportunities and work have been extremely rewarding both personally and professionally. I only wish that the pay was higher."

The VISTA Volunteers who responded to the survey also reported that their VISTA experience generally helped them in a number of other ways which they rated on their survey forms. Table 3.2 summarizes their ratings, which suggest that the VISTA experience is particularly helpful to Volunteers in terms networking, gaining self-confidence and enhancing social interaction and communication skills.

TABLE 3.2
EXTENT TO WHICH VISTA EXPERIENCE HELPS VOLUNTEERS ACCORDING TO VISTA VOLUNTEERS

Area Rated	Mean Score
Networking	3.1
Personal self-confidence	3.0
Ability to interact with people from different backgrounds	3.0
Communication skills	3.0
Ability to get along with supervisors and co-workers	2.8
Ability to complete tasks	2.8
Ability to organize time	2.8
Change in career goals	2.5

Scale: 1 = no effect; 2 = somewhat effective; 3 = effective; 4 = very effective

Source: VISTA Volunteers, N=735

We asked VISTA Volunteers about their plans after finishing their VISTA assignment. Approximately 39% of VISTA Volunteers said they would re-enroll with VISTA. When asked, if they had to do it over again, 97% of VISTA Volunteers responded that they would choose to become a VISTA Volunteer again.

Success of VISTA Volunteers

We asked the Volunteers and current and former VISTA Supervisors to rate the extent to which VISTA Volunteers are successful in eleven specific Volunteer activities. In general, all three groups rated the VISTA Volunteers as successful in performing their assignments. As Table 3.3 shows, they rated the VISTA Volunteers highest in conducting outreach and awareness activities, providing direct services, recruiting clients, assessing client needs, developing programs and performing committee activities. They rated the Volunteers least successful in fundraising, office administration and recordkeeping.

Ninety-seven percent of the current Supervisors reported that VISTA Volunteers are cost-effective to the sponsoring organization. Similarly, 98% of the current Supervisors indicated that they would use VISTA Volunteers again.

TABLE 3.3
SUCCESS OF VISTA VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES (MEAN SCORES)

Activity	Current Supervisors	Former Supervisors	VISTA Volunteers
Most Successful			
Outreach and awareness	3.4	3.3	3.3
Direct service	3.4	Not rated	3.4
Client recruitment	3.2	3.1	3.1
Client needs assessment	3.2	3.2	3.3
Program development	3.2	Not rated	3.3
Committee activities	3.1	Not rated	3.2
Medium Success			
Recruitment of community volunteers	3.0	2.8	2.9
Training of community volunteers	3.0	2.7	3.0
Least Successful			
Recordkeeping	3.0	2.0	3.3
Office administration	2.8	2.8	3.2
Fundraising	2.8	2.6	2.8
Overall Score	3.1	2.8	3.2

Scale: 1 = not successful; 2 = somewhat successful; 3 = successful; 4 = very successful

Source: Current VISTA Supervisors, N=71; former VISTA Supervisors, N=84; VISTA Volunteers, N=233

Using correlational analysis, we examined the characteristics of a "successful" Volunteer experience, as rated by the VISTA Supervisors. The characteristics that were most predictive of a "successful" Volunteer experience were: the size of a sponsoring organization's budget, the usefulness of in-service training provided by the sponsoring organization, adequate Volunteer skills for the VISTA assignment and formal evaluations of Volunteer performance. Together, these factors account for 52% of the predicted success of a Volunteer.

OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES SERVED BY VISTA

We examined two outcomes for communities served by VISTA:

- Perceived benefits to the communities; and
- Success of VISTA in addressing community needs.

Community Benefits

We assessed the community benefits in an open-ended question which asked community members, VISTA Volunteers, and current VISTA Supervisors to describe the benefits VISTA provides to local communities. From their answers, we identified seven categories of community benefits:

- Direct Services: VISTA Volunteers work directly with clients in areas such as child care, counseling, youth recreation programs, mentoring programs and emergency assistance services.
- Community Partnerships: VISTA activities promote the development of cooperative relationships among community organizations and diverse community groups.
- Outreach and Awareness: VISTA Volunteers promote awareness of community issues, problems and needs. VISTA Volunteers also encourage community groups to become actively involved in solving community problems.
- Resource Development: VISTA Volunteers help to mobilize financial and human resources in the community to develop programs to combat poverty.
- Referral and Assistance: VISTA Volunteers provide information and assistance in connecting clients with needed services related to health care, child care, housing, education and emergency relief.
- Education and Training: VISTA Volunteers conduct workshops, make presentations, lead seminars and disseminate educational materials to develop the knowledge and skills of community residents.
- Employment: The VISTA program creates employment opportunities within the community by developing employment possibilities in sponsoring organizations.

Figure 3.1 summarizes the perceptions of the three respondent groups according to the seven categories of benefits. The percentages in this table indicate the proportion of each respondent group which described a particular benefit included in one of the categories. The figure shows that the three respondent groups view the benefits provided to local communities very differently.

Community members consider the primary benefit of VISTA to be the provision of direct services to the community. VISTA Volunteers consider the main benefit to be the provision of referral and assistance services. Current VISTA Supervisors highlight outreach and awareness as the main community benefit. All respondent groups consider education and training and employment as of less benefit to the community.

Addressing Community Needs

To assess the extent to which VISTA is addressing community needs, we asked community members to list the areas of greatest need. We then matched their responses against the responses of current Supervisors and Volunteers regarding the primary activities of VISTA. Table 3.4 shows that community members reported that the three areas of greatest community need are economic development, outreach and awareness and health care. The table also shows that VISTA projects are addressing these three top needs less frequently than other needs rated lower by the community members (e.g., child care, youth programs, social services). Twenty-nine percent of the community members indicated that VISTA did not address economic development, the area of greatest need in their community.

The primary areas of VISTA focus directly match only one of the three top rated priority needs--outreach and referral (see "Other activities" in Table 2.10 on page 32). Other primary activities, according to current VISTA Supervisors and Volunteers, are community planning and organization, education and literacy. Community needs for economic development and health care are addressed by VISTA Volunteers, but these efforts appear to be secondary and approached indirectly through community outreach and referral. Examples 3.1 (public housing) and 3.2 (economic development) represent projects that correspond to the full range of needs discussed in Table 3.4.

FIGURE 3.1
Benefits Provided to Local Communities by VISTA Volunteers

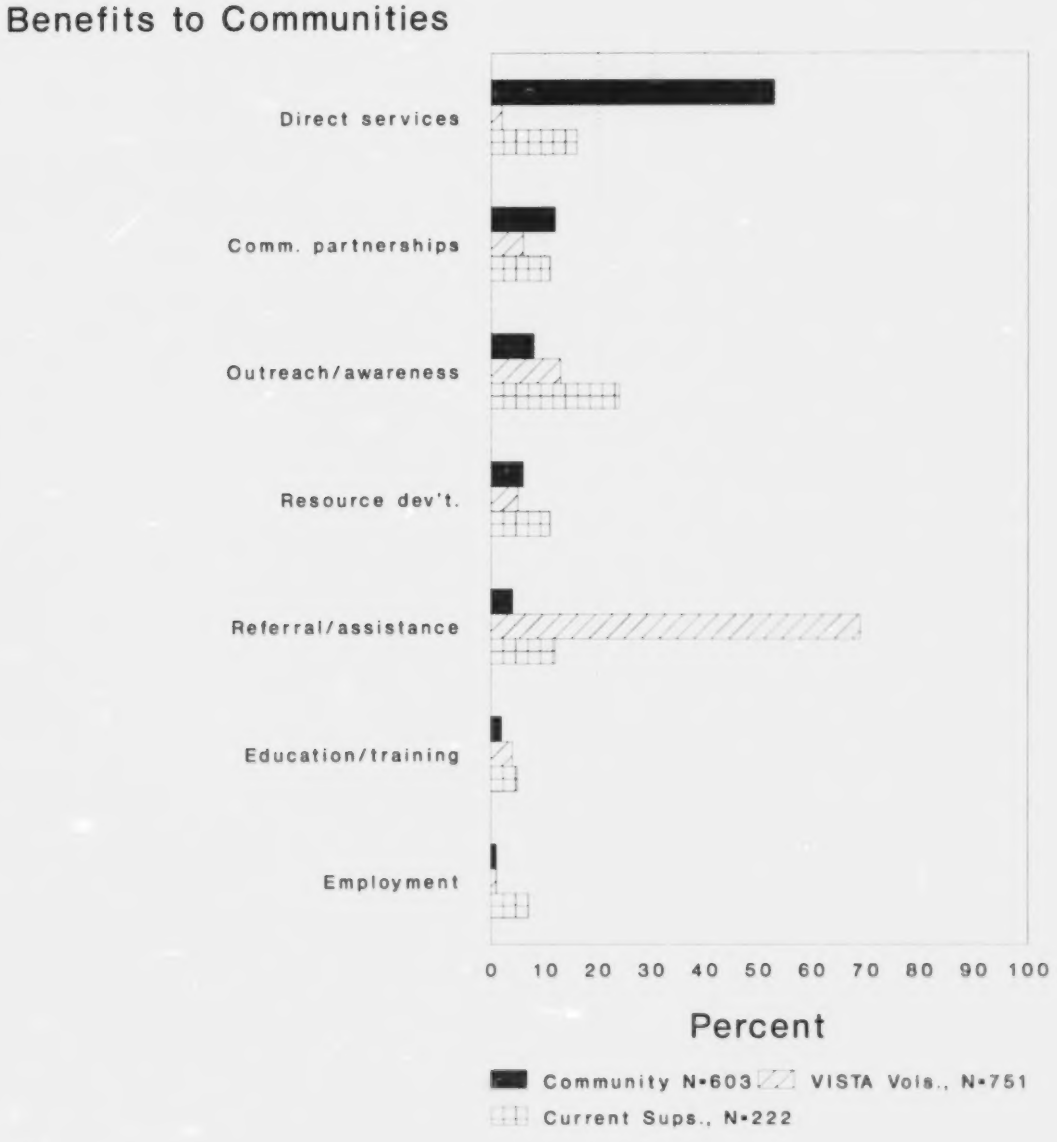


TABLE 3.4
EXTENT TO WHICH VISTA IS ADDRESSING PRIORITY COMMUNITY NEEDS ACCORDING TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Priority Community Need	Percent Rating Community Need as a Priority N=628	Percent Indicating Priority Need is Not Addressed by VISTA N=154
Economic development	20%	29%
Outreach and awareness	18%	11%
Health care	12%	13%
Child care	7%	6%
Youth programs	7%	5%
Social services	7%	9%
Basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, furniture, donation of professional services)	5%	6%

Source: Community members

OUTCOMES FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

We examined four outcomes for sponsoring organizations:

- Influence of VISTA Volunteers on sponsoring organizations;
- Resource mobilization strategies;
- Success of resource mobilization; and
- Barriers to continuation of services.

EXAMPLE 3.1
PUBLIC HOUSING IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

VISTA Volunteers work on a residents' council established with the support of a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant. This council serves approximately 13,000 residents in 12 public housing facilities administered by this city's housing authority. The low-income residents are 60% Hispanic, 30% Black and 20% White. The Hispanic representation is roughly equivalent to the local population, whereas Whites are under-represented and Blacks are over-represented. Most of the residents are mothers who are single parents and receive some form of government assistance.

The VISTA project has three goals: to empower the residents to control their living environment; to provide comprehensive and integrated programs of work, education, job training, economic development and support services; and to help families move off welfare and become economically self-sufficient.

In the first year of VISTA funding, this project had eight VISTA Volunteers. All were recruited locally and six lived in public housing. All were women. The primary activity of the Volunteers was to develop, administer and code a needs-assessment survey. Future activities were determined by the results of the survey. Other activities in which Volunteers were engaged were: enhancing individual Volunteer work plans (through survey analysis, input from council members), establishing a permanent leadership training center in the community, developing a permanent financial base for the community, establishing a community volunteer and mentor system, and establishing a tenant self-advocacy program.

EXAMPLE 3.2
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BUTTE, MONTANA

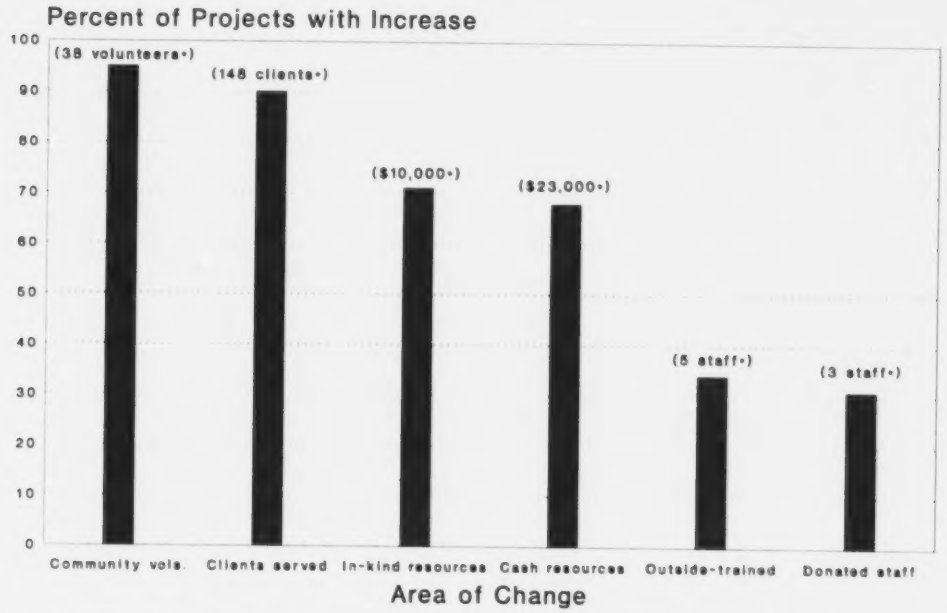
VISTA Volunteers work for a development corporation in a declining mining community. Mining formerly provided jobs, economic prosperity, and political power, but the decline of the mining industry over the past 30 years has changed the local economic situation dramatically. Employment in mining has declined from a high of about 8,000 jobs to the present level of 300 jobs. For decades, this mining community was populous and dynamic, but today it numbers about 35,000 residents who are predominantly aged. Much of the downtown section is dilapidated, run down, and unsafe. The mining activities that made this community prosperous are now causing serious health concerns because minerals (arsenic, mercury) have contaminated the groundwater. Current economic conditions have forced most young people to leave and seek employment elsewhere. Community members believe that if conditions can be improved, the young people will return home to become permanent residents in the community.

The VISTA project is a continuation of an earlier community development project which ended in 1991. The main goal of the current project is community development focused on attracting light assembly and manufacturing industries. The development corporation provides jobs to talented and educated young people who would otherwise leave the community; it utilizes VISTA Volunteers in well-defined community development tasks. The products derived from the use of these Volunteers have created short- and long-term jobs for the community. Six VISTA Volunteers work in a wide range of programs. Their efforts have already resulted in two small industries relocating to the community. Some of the VISTA activities include developing a trade center and a free-trade zone, a needs-assessment questionnaire, tourism marketing strategies and a detailed database describing what the community can provide to small industries interested in relocating to a positive business climate. This last effort has already played a major role in the relocation of one business. The VISTA Supervisor emphasizes that economic development is a very appropriate domain for VISTA projects nationwide.

VISTA Volunteer Influence on Sponsoring Organizations

We asked current VISTA Supervisors and VISTA Volunteers to identify and rate changes in the effectiveness of sponsoring organizations since the implementation of VISTA activities. In general, both Supervisors and Volunteers indicated that the VISTA activity led to an increase in the number of community volunteers, regular clients served, and in-kind resources for the organization. For example, 81% of the current VISTA Supervisors who responded to the survey stated that the number of community volunteers increased significantly since their VISTA project began. The overall results are very favorable, as displayed in Figure 3.2. Sponsoring organizations benefit from the VISTA program as more Volunteers create more demand, generate more money, and strengthen the organization's operations.

FIGURE 3.2
Changes Attributable to Volunteers



Source: Current VISTA Supervisor (N = 239)

•Median increase in projects where there was an increase

As shown in Table 3.5, both current Supervisors and VISTA Volunteers stated that the largest increases experienced by sponsoring organizations are cooperative partnerships with other community organizations, number of community volunteers recruited and number of regular clients served. The overall median increase attributed to VISTA Volunteers is 115 new clients served and 35 additional community volunteers recruited per sponsoring organization. The additional amount of in-kind resources attributed to VISTA Volunteers per sponsor averages $10,000. The generation of additional cash resources to support the operation of sponsoring organizations showed a median gain of $23,000 attributable to VISTA Volunteers (see Figure 3.2).

TABLE 3.5
PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS AND VISTA'S INFLUENCE ON THOSE CHANGES (MEAN SCORES)

Area of Change	Change[1] Since VISTA Project Began*	VISTA's Influence[2] on Change**
Partnerships with other organizations	2.9	3.2
Number of community volunteers recruited	2.8	3.3
Number of regular clients served	2.8	3.2
In-kind resources for operation of program	2.8	2.9
Skills of community members	2.7	2.9
Leadership in the community	2.7	2.8
Plans for new programs or areas	2.7	2.8
Types of clients served	2.6	2.8
Cash resources for operation of program	2.6	2.4
Management or administrative systems	2.4	2.3

*Scale: 1 = decrease, 2 = no change, 3 = increase
**Scale: 1 = no influence; 2 = minor influence, 3 = moderate influence, 4 = major influence

Source: Current VISTA Supervisors, N=148

The nature and degree of a VISTA Volunteer's influence in promoting positive change are consistent with these above findings. Current Supervisors reported that Volunteers have had some influence in promoting organizational change among sponsors, particularly in the number of clients served, the number of community volunteers recruited and the promotion of partnerships with other community organizations. Current Supervisors report that Volunteers have been least influential in effecting change in a sponsor's management system and in generating additional cash resources to support a sponsor's operations.

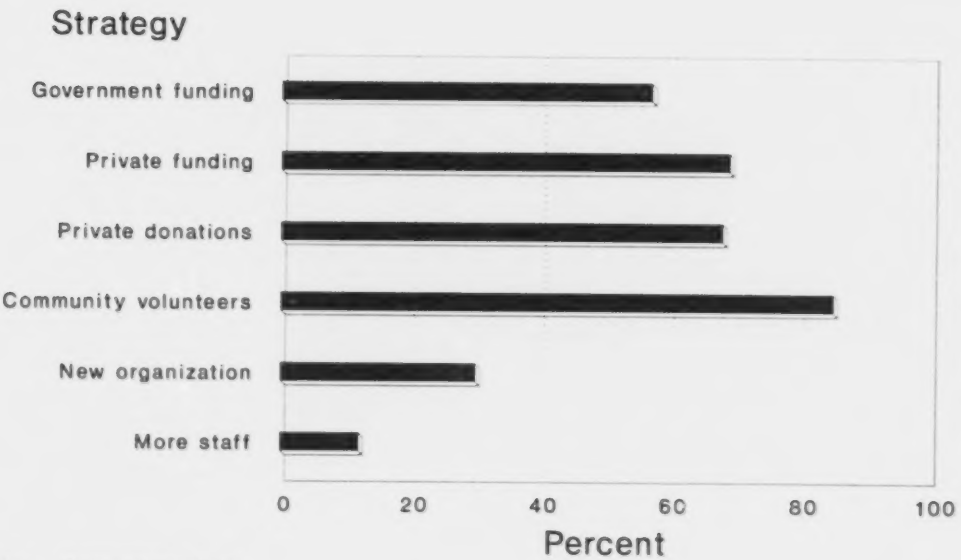
[1]Change here refers to the impact VISTA Volunteers have had on the areas listed since they began their assignment.

[2]Influence here refers to the effect VISTA Volunteers have had on the effectiveness of the sponsoring organization in the areas listed.

Resource Mobilization Strategies

Based on survey responses from former and current VISTA Supervisors, we estimate that 80% of the sponsoring organizations have developed resource mobilization plans to continue the efforts of the VISTA Volunteers after VISTA funding ends. Most often, the continuation strategy adopted by sponsoring organizations involves finding community volunteers to perform the activities and services previously supported by VISTA funds. This strategy is used by 85% of the current sponsoring organizations (see Figure 3.3).

FIGURE 3.3
Strategies for Continuation of the VISTA Project After Funding Ends



Source: Current Project Supervisor, N = 239

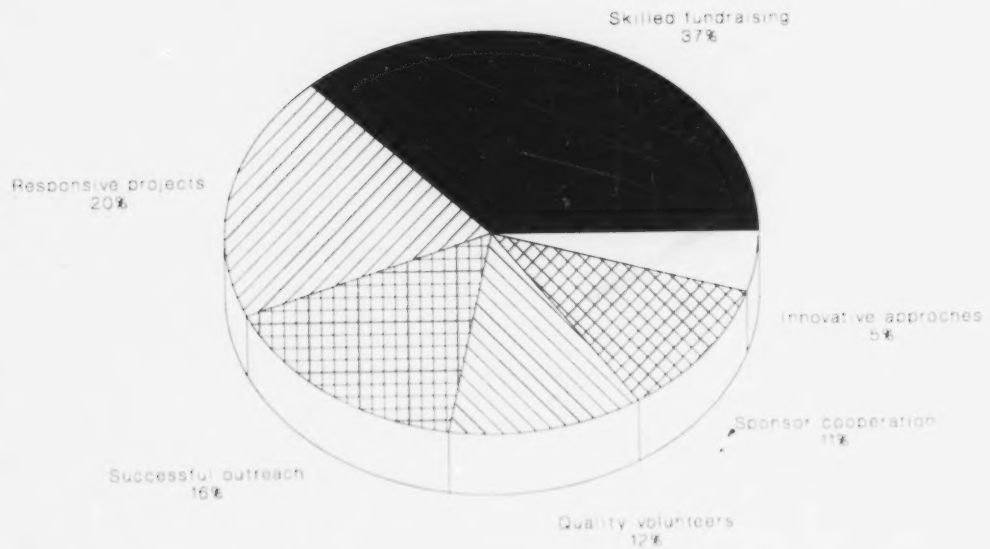
A second strategy used for continuing VISTA activities is to generate other support through fundraising. Most often, the sponsoring organizations seek continuation funding from private, rather than public, sources. About two-thirds of the current sponsoring organizations plan to obtain funding from private-sector donations and response to funding proposals. Writing proposals for government funding is less commonly done.

A third strategy used by sponsoring organizations is to transfer activities previously supported by VISTA to other local organizations. Approximately 30% of the current VISTA Supervisors report that they plan to identify other community organizations to carry on VISTA activities after Federal funding ends.

Current Volunteers (59%) are involved in trying to obtain cash donations to support the VISTA project, while 73% of the current VISTA Volunteers spent time trying to obtain "in-kind" donations such as food, clothing, furniture and donation of professional services. The VISTA Volunteers spend a median of 10% of their time on such activities. The median target for continuation funding for a current sponsoring organization is $20,000. Approximately 79% of the current Supervisors report some success in raising continuation funds, but at the time of survey have attained only about 43% of their target levels overall.

Figure 3.4 displays the key elements that current VISTA Supervisors believe contribute to their success in raising additional funds. These elements are described below.

FIGURE 3.4
Key Elements in Successful Fundraising for VISTA Continuation



Source: Current Supervisors, N = 153

- Skilled Fundraising Approach: VISTA projects that are successful in raising continuation funds conduct well-organized fundraising campaigns characterized by good planning, coordination and team work and persistent efforts which allow the sponsoring organization to develop professional funding proposals that appeal to private-sector sources.

- Responsive VISTA Projects: VISTA projects that provide high-quality services targeted to community needs develop credibility among potential funding sources. Reputations born of success tend to enhance the appeal of VISTA to community members and organizations which, in turn, are more likely to support the continuation of VISTA activities through local funding.

- Successful Outreach and Awareness: Community support of, and involvement in, VISTA activities are enhanced through effective VISTA public relations efforts. These efforts enhance community awareness of the impact of VISTA on important community problems.

- High-Quality Volunteers: VISTA projects that are successful in raising continuation funds have dedicated, self-directed and hard-working Volunteers who are involved in fundraising activities and contribute to writing grant proposals.

- Cooperation and Support of Sponsoring Organizations: Sponsoring organizations also contribute to successful resource mobilization efforts by facilitating inter-agency cooperation and private-sector support.

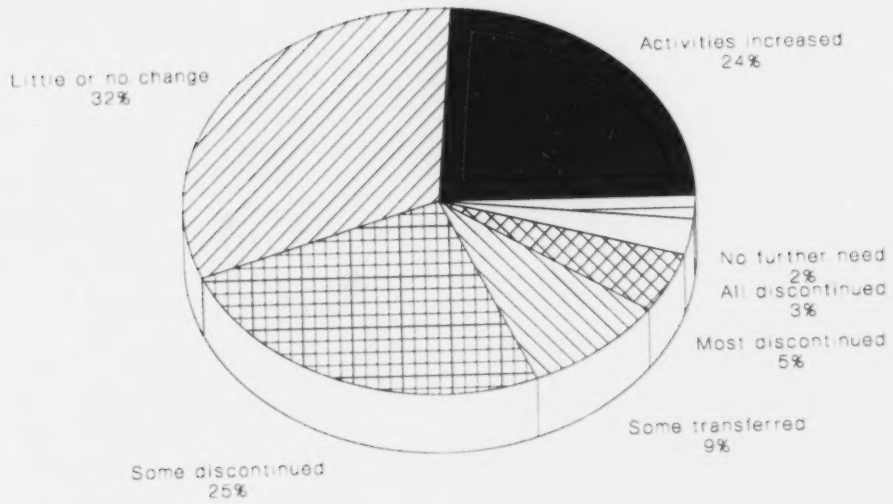
- Innovative Approaches: A willingness to test the effectiveness of new fundraising approaches is also a characteristic of successful continuation efforts.

Success of Resource Mobilization

To assess the outcome of resource mobilization efforts, we asked former VISTA Supervisors the following question: "What happened to the activities and services associated with the VISTA project after VISTA funding ended?" Figure 3.5 shows the answers of 183 former Supervisors who responded to this question.

Sixty-five percent of the former Supervisors said that the VISTA-related activities and services continued at the same level, increased, or were transferred to another organization after VISTA funding ended. According to these respondents, it appears that, in most of these cases (59%), the sponsoring organizations absorbed the costs of the activities and services previously funded by VISTA by using paid staff and/or community volunteers. However, 10% of the former Supervisors said that all or most of VISTA-related activities and services were discontinued, 25% reported that some VISTA-related activities and services were discontinued.

FIGURE 3.5
What Happened to VISTA Services after VISTA Funding Ended?



Source: Former Supervisors, N = 183

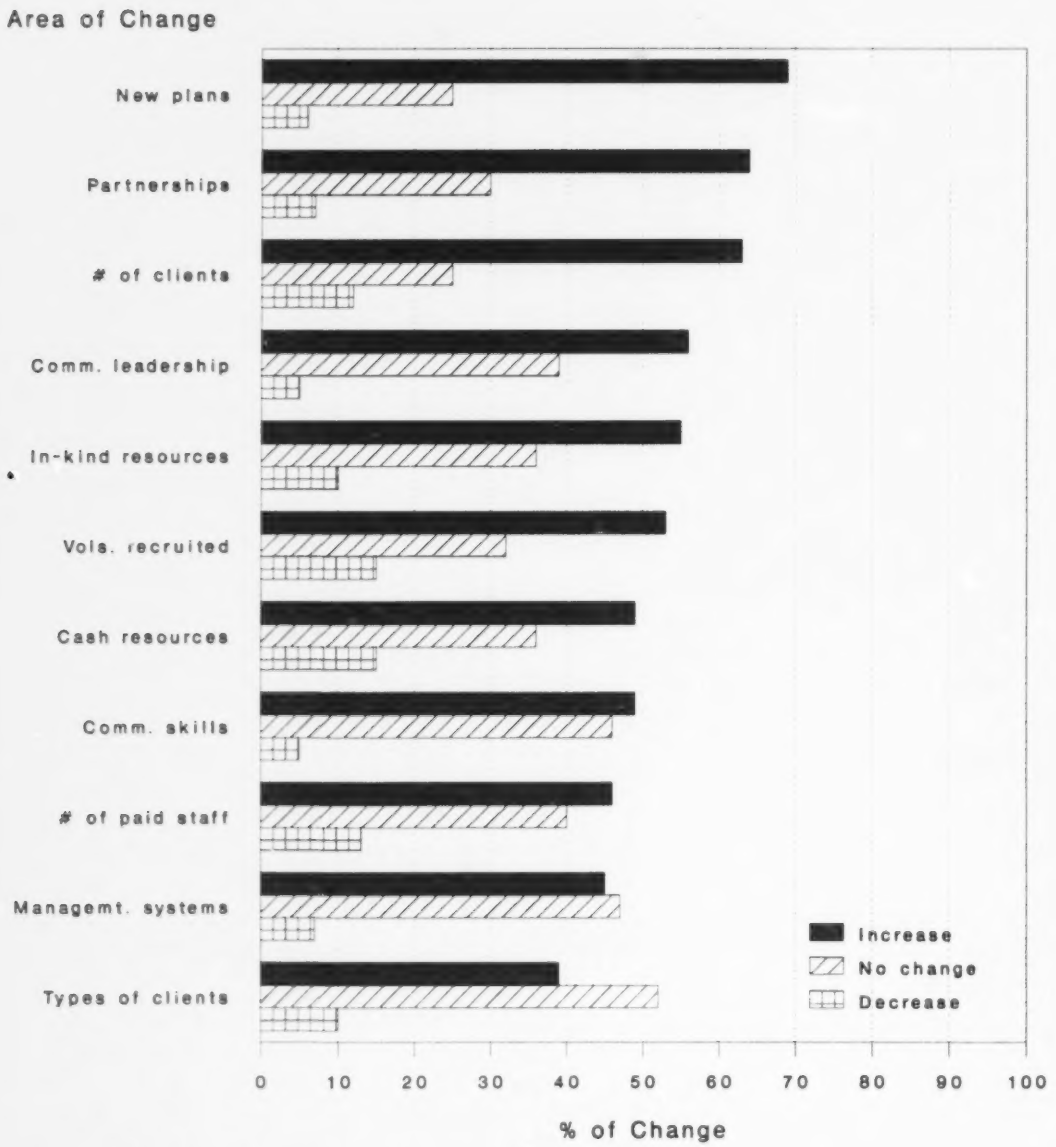
According to these former Supervisors, many services provided to low-income communities by sponsoring organizations increased and improved after VISTA funding ended (see Figure 3.6). More than 50% reported increases in new plans, partnerships, number of clients, community leadership, in-kind resources and number of volunteers recruited. The largest decreases reported were in the number of volunteers recruited and cash resources.

Barriers to the Continuation of Services

All four respondent groups listed barriers to the continuation of VISTA services after Federal support ends. Figure 3.7 shows the four categories of barriers that the respondents identified and the percentage of respondents from each group which noted the barrier as a problem. The principal concerns were:

- Alternate Funding: Difficulties in replacing federally supported VISTA Volunteers was cited by all respondent groups as the greatest problem in continuing VISTA-related services after VISTA support has ended. Current VISTA Supervisors indicated that the lack of alternate funding is their primary concern by far. The respondents attributed this problem to limited funding sources in local communities, competition for scarce financial resources, a constrained economy, limitations in human resources to generate replacement funds and a variety of administrative problems associated with obtaining government grants.

FIGURE 3.6
Outcomes after Termination of VISTA Funding According to Former Supervisors



Source: Former Supervisors, N = 192

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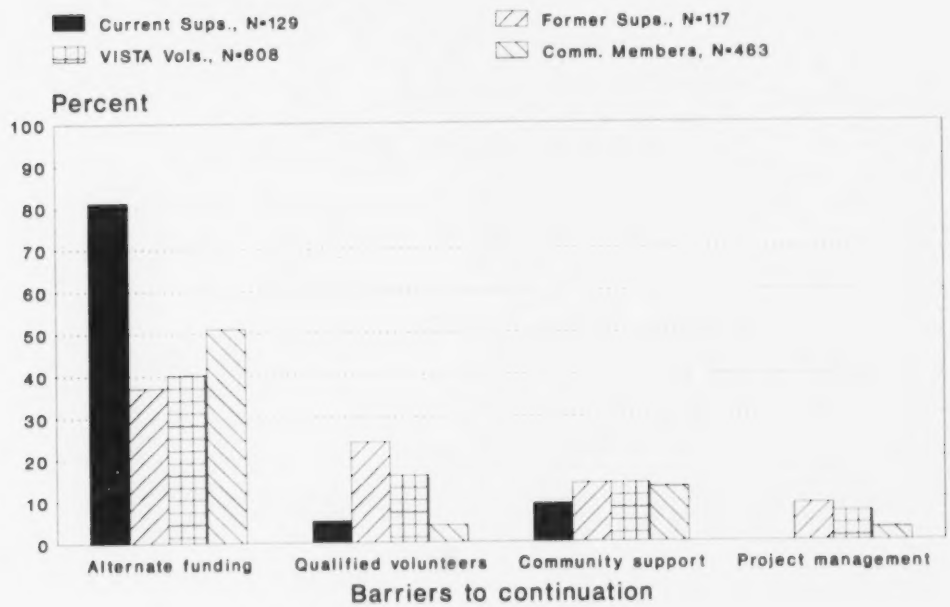
FIGURE 3.7
Barriers to VISTA Continuation



- Qualified Community Volunteers: The inability to sustain VISTA services after the end of VISTA Volunteer support is also attributed to problems in recruiting community volunteers who have appropriate qualifications for meeting community needs. Former VISTA Supervisors particularly noted their concerns about the availability of qualified volunteers to replace the VISTA Volunteers.

- Community Support: All respondent groups commented on the lack of community understanding of, and involvement in, the issues and problems addressed by the VISTA projects. They cited this lack of community support as a reason for the discontinuation of VISTA services after Federal support ended.

- Project Management: All of the groups except the current VISTA Supervisors cited ineffective management of VISTA projects as a reason for the failure to sustain VISTA services after Federal funding ends. Problems in project management relate to supervision, communication, coordination and training within the sponsoring organizations.

SUMMARY

Outcomes for VISTA Volunteers

Outcomes for VISTA Volunteers are perceived differently by the Volunteers, VISTA Supervisors and community members:

- Volunteers stated that they largely derive satisfaction from helping others. They also emphasize that the development of knowledge and skills will benefit their careers after VISTA.

- VISTA Supervisors emphasized the career development opportunities for the Volunteers, which are provided through in-service training and the development of personal networks during their VISTA assignment.

- Community members highlighted increased awareness of issues facing low-income communities as a primary benefit to VISTA Volunteers.

- Tangible, financial benefits (a modest allowance and health insurance) are emphasized the least by all three respondent groups.

Outcomes for Communities

Communities served by VISTA benefit in a number of ways:

- Most notably, VISTA Volunteers work directly with clients in many areas, including education and training. They also help people obtain needed services through referral and outreach.

- Through VISTA's focus on community planning and organization, Volunteers help develop poverty-related programs and cooperative partnerships among community agencies.

- Important community needs which VISTA apparently does not address as high priorities include economic development and health care.

Outcomes for Sponsoring Organizations

Community services initiated and supported by Federal VISTA funds appear to have been continued in most cases following the termination of Federal support:

- In most instances, these services are absorbed by the sponsoring organizations through the use of community volunteers in place of VISTA Volunteers.

- Fundraising and donations and grants from the private sector help sponsoring organizations continue the community services previously supported by VISTA grants.

- In some cases, sponsoring organizations transfer activities previously supported by VISTA to other community organizations.

The presence of a responsive and effective VISTA project coupled with a strong outreach component is a prerequisite for successful continuation of VISTA services. The continuation of VISTA services can be promoted by successful fundraising efforts, a responsive and effective program of services, effective publicity, a supportive sponsoring organization and innovative approaches to raising funds.

CHAPTER FOUR:
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation focused on the VISTA Volunteers, the communities in which they serve and the organizations that sponsor the VISTA projects. Chapter One provided an overview of the VISTA program. Chapter Two provided a description of the VISTA Volunteers, project activities, communities served and sponsoring organizations. Chapter Three examined the outcomes of VISTA on the three groups and the strengths and weaknesses of resource mobilization strategies. This chapter presents our conclusions and recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS

VISTA Volunteers provide valuable services on an economical basis to local communities that struggle against poverty.

VISTA Volunteers render low-cost, valuable services to help communities eliminate poverty and poverty-related problems. These services include outreach and awareness, program development and client recruitment as well as direct services. The average direct yearly cost to the Federal government for a VISTA Volunteer is $11,837. ACTION's administrative cost of $3,500 per volunteer results in an average yearly cost of $15,337. VISTA Supervisors and VISTA Volunteers predominantly target low-income families at or below the poverty level (80%); most of these families (65%) receive public assistance. The communities in which these projects are located have economic needs well above the national average: 16% have households that are at or below the poverty level, and 22% of the adults have less than a 9th-grade education. Virtually all of the current VISTA Supervisors (97%) said that VISTA Volunteers are cost-effective for their organizations despite the time required to train and supervise the Volunteers.

Community members stated that the primary benefit of VISTA is the provision of direct services to the community. VISTA Volunteers considered the main benefit to be the provision of referral and assistance services. VISTA Supervisors highlighted outreach and awareness as the main community benefit.

VISTA Volunteers fulfill their one-year commitment and successfully perform their tasks.

Once recruited and assigned to their projects, most VISTA Volunteers (81%) serve their one-year service commitment, and more than half are extending their service time into a second year. Overall, VISTA Volunteers were rated successful in performing VISTA-related activities by both current and former Supervisors. Almost half of the community members rated the VISTA projects as "very successful" in addressing community needs, and 99% rated the projects at least "somewhat successful." The activities rated most successful by VISTA Supervisors and VISTA Volunteers are outreach and awareness, direct service, client recruitment and client needs assessment. The characteristics found to be most predictive of a "successful" Volunteer

experience were the size of the sponsoring organization's budget, the quality of in-service training, Volunteer skills for the assignment, and formal performance evaluations.

VISTA Volunteers gain considerable benefits from their VISTA experience.

The Volunteers stated that they benefit through self-satisfaction (41%), career development (34%) and community awareness (22%). Another benefit noted is in-service training. Most Volunteers (86%) join VISTA to improve their community and derive satisfaction from helping others. VISTA Volunteers also improved their networking and communication skills and their ability to interact with others.

Few volunteers join VISTA simply to obtain a job or some type of training. However, availability plays a role in recruitment. The logical prospects for VISTA Volunteers are persons who are not already on a career path or who are between jobs. Most recruits are unemployed, students, retired or employed part-time.

VISTA projects are catalysts for improving the capacity of sponsoring organizations serving local communities.

VISTA projects enable sponsoring organizations and their communities to use VISTA Volunteers at relatively low cost for a limited period of time. The availability of these Volunteers enables organizations to increase the number of clients served and the number of community volunteers. VISTA Volunteers also enhance the fundraising capabilities of their sponsors and the formation of partnerships with other organizations. The current VISTA Supervisors (97%) said the VISTA Volunteers are cost-effective to their organization, and 98% indicated that they would use Volunteers again.

Local communities received several benefits from the VISTA Volunteers. Community members cited the following benefits: direct services (53%), creating new partnerships among community elements (12%), expanding outreach and awareness (8%) and development of additional community resources (6%). VISTA Supervisors and VISTA Volunteers perceived that the Volunteers had a moderate degree of influence in changing the way sponsoring organizations serve their communities. Both VISTA Supervisors and Volunteers indicated that the VISTA Volunteers particularly enhanced the development of cooperative partnerships and the recruitment of community volunteers.

Sponsors and communities are demonstrating the ability to sustain VISTA initiatives after VISTA funding ends.

The services provided by VISTA Volunteers have generally been continued after the completion of the VISTA projects. More than half of the former VISTA Supervisors (56%) indicated that the services increased or that there was little or no change. Only 5% reported that all of the VISTA services were discontinued after VISTA funding ended. Resource mobilization

plans exist in 78% of current VISTA projects and in 82% of former VISTA projects. The main barrier to continuation of services is the development of alternative funding.

Economic development is emerging as a priority community need.

The three areas of greatest community need according to community members are economic development (20%), community outreach and awareness (18%) and health care (13%). VISTA projects are addressing these needs less frequently than other needs that are rated lower. The three primary areas of VISTA projects are community planning and organization, education and literacy. The fourth primary area matches one of the three top needs cited by the community members--outreach and referral.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- *The VISTA program should be expanded to serve a greater number of communities.*
- *VISTA should develop improved guidelines for sponsors in the area of assessing priority community needs.*
- *VISTA should assign VISTA Volunteers to sponsoring organizations in which Volunteers can have the greatest catalytic effect on local communities.*
- *VISTA should emphasize to the sponsors the program characteristics that are most associated with a successful VISTA Volunteer experience.*

REFERENCES CITED IN REPORT

ACTION

Congressional Briefing on VISTA, March 1993, Washington, D.C.

VISTA Handbook for Volunteers and Sponsors, Number 4302, 1990 (revised 4301.1), Washington, D.C.

VISTA Project Application, Form A-1421, October 1990, Washington, D.C.

Volunteers in Service to America: 1980 Activities and Outcomes Survey, Evaluation Division, Office of Policy and Planning, September 1981, Washington, D.C.

Project Program Report, ACTION Form A-1023, October 1990, Washington, D.C.

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Economic Opportunity Act (Public Law 93-113), 1964.

The Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-113), 1973, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4950 et. seq.).

Organization Plan No. 1, July 1, 1971.

Other References

VISTA Goal Accomplishments and Community Effects Evaluation, Final Report, July 1988, Washington, D.C.

An Evaluation Report on the VISTA Literacy Corps, August 1991, Washington, D.C.

Summaries of Income and Poverty Status, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, Washington, D.C.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

OMB Approval No. 3001-0131
Expires: 7/93

VISTA EVALUATION
VISTA Volunteer Mail Questionnaire

Name of Respondent: N = 803 (3/5/93)

Title: _____ Telephone #: _____

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by Development Associates for the ACTION Agency. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of VISTA Volunteers on the project to which they are assigned and the communities in which they are serving.

The study is authorized under PL93-113, the "Domestic Service Volunteer Act", as amended. While you are not required to respond, your answers are needed to make our reports comprehensive and accurate. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential as required by the Federal Privacy Act. No individual or sponsoring organization will be identified in any report resulting from this study. These questions should take approximately 25-30 minutes to complete.*

Please answer the following questions as completely and accurately as you can. Thank you for your participation in this evaluation.

Please return to:

Development Associates, Inc.
c/o VISTA Evaluation
1730 N. Lynn St.
Arlington, VA 22209

* Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the ACTION Program Evaluation Office, Washington, D.C. 20525; and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project, OMB No. 3001-0120, Washington, D.C. 20503.

** Notice to Individuals with Disabilities: Upon request, ACTION will provide alternative format versions of this report. Contact ACTION's Office of Policy Research and Evaluation, 1100 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20525. Tel.: (202) 606-4821.

1. When did you begin your service as a VISTA Volunteer? [MDN] July /1991 (month/year)

2. How long have you been a VISTA Volunteer on this project?

MDN = 1 year ____ years ____ months

3. When does your current VISTA term of service end? July / 93 (month/year)

VISTA PROJECT ACTIVITIES/CLIENTS

4. What are the primary and secondary (if any) activities of your VISTA project? (Circle one activity in each column.) N = 803

	Primary Activity		Secondary Activity	
a. Community Planning and Organizing	01	38%	01	15%
b. Economic Development	02	12%	02	20%
c. Education	03	34%	03	20%
d. Housing	04	13%	04	19%
e. Job Development	05	12%	05	19%
f. Vocational Education	06	8%	06	19%
g. Health/Nutrition	07	12%	07	17%
h. Homelessness/Shelter	08	12%	08	17%
i. Hunger	09	12%	09	17%
j. Mental Health, Counseling	10	9%	10	18%
k. Child Abuse and Neglect	11	11%	11	17%
l. Domestic Violence	12	9%	12	18%
m. Runaway Youth	13	5%	13	18%
n. Refugees	14	3%	14	19%
o. Substance Abuse	15	14%	15	15%
p. Energy and Environmental	16	6%	16	16%
q. Literacy	17	28%	17	15%
r. Other Activities (Specify) Outreach -- 20%	18	18%	18	6%

5. What groups does this VISTA project serve? (Circle all that apply.)

N		FREQUENCY	
304	a. Physically/mentally disabled	1	38%
176	b. Migrants	2	22%
391	c. Senior Citizens	3	49%
516	d. Youth	4	64%
115	e. Refugees	5	14%
664	f. Low Income	6	83%
295	g. Homeless	7	37%
389	h. Families in Crisis	8	48%
298	i. Literacy Clients	9	37%
390	j. Unemployed	10	49%
88	k. Other Clients (Specify) HIV and Inmates (17% ea.)	11	11%

6. What is the primary racial/ethnic group served by this VISTA project? (Circle one.)

American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	2%
Black, but not of Hispanic origin	3	29%
Hispanic or Puerto Rican	4	12%
White, but not of Hispanic origin	5	33%
Other (Specify) Multiracial	6	21%

7. On the average, how many hours per week do you serve as a VISTA Volunteer?

40 hours per week
(MEAN) (MDN)

8. In a given week, estimate how many hours you spend on the following activities:

Activity	Hours per Week (MDN)
a. Client recruitment	3
b. Community outreach/public awareness (including development of outreach/ promotional materials)	5
c. Recruitment of local volunteers	3
d. Training of local volunteers	2
e. Project recordkeeping	3
f. General office administration (including development of management or administrative systems)	2
g. Fundraising	1
h. Assessment of client needs	2
i. Resource development	2
j. Program development/coordination	3
k. Committee/council meetings or activities	2
l. Providing direct service to clients	3
m. Other (specify) Moot	0
n. Other (specify) Moot	0
TOTAL HOURS PER WEEK	40

9. In performing your VISTA project activities, what percentage of your time is spent:

	[MDN]
a. At the sponsoring organization	50 %
b. In the local community	33 %
c. Traveling	10 %
d. Other (specify) Moot	0 %
TOTAL	100%

10. Do you have sufficient skills for the activities you were assigned to perform?

Yes	97%	1
No	3%	2

11. In which activities do you feel you have been particularly effective or successful? Please rate each of the activities listed below using the following scale:

1 = not successful
2 = somewhat successful
3 = successful
4 = very successful
~~NA = not applicable/do not do this~~

N	Activity	MEAN	Not Successful		MDN	Very Successful	
580	a. Client recruitment	3.09	1	2	(3)	4	NA
724	b. Community outreach/public awareness (including development of outreach/ promotional material	3.31	1	2	(3)	4	NA
690	c. Recruitment of community volunteers	2.88	1	2	(3)	4	NA
610	d. Training of community volunteers	2.95	1	2	(3)	4	NA
673	e. Project recordkeeping	3.29	1	2	(3)	4	NA
518	f. General office administration (including development of management or administrative systems)	3.17	1	2	(3)	4	NA
511	g. Fundraising	2.79	1	2	(3)	4	NA
622	h. Assessment of client needs	3.30	1	2	(3)	4	NA
653	i. Resource development	3.09	1	2	(3)	4	NA
672	j. Program development/coordination	3.27	1	2	(3)	4	NA
684	k. Committee/council meetings or activities	3.21	1	2	(3)	4	NA
579	l. Providing direct service to clients	3.45	1	2	3	(4)	NA
66	m. Other (specify) Ad hoc	3.54	1	2	3	(4)	
14	n. Other (specify) Public relations	3.50	1	2	3	(4)	

12. Are you involved in any community activities outside of your VISTA project?

Yes 55% 1

No 45% 2

If yes, please list the activities and the average number of hours you spend on each per week.

Community Activities	Hours per week	
a. Civic organizations	8	43%
b. Social services	9	15%
c. Education programs	6,5	14%

SUPERVISION

13. a. How often do you usually meet individually with your project supervisor? (Circle one.) N = 783 MDN = 2

Daily	1	31%
At least weekly	2	41%
Once or twice a month	3	22%
Less than once a month	4	6%
Never	5	1%
~~Other (specify)~~ _____	~~6~~	

b. How often do you usually talk by telephone with your project supervisor? (Circle one.) N = 685 MDN = 2

Daily	1	28%
At least weekly	2	35%
Once or twice a month	3	14%
Less than once a month	4	9%
Never	5	14%
~~Other (specify)~~ _____	~~6~~	

14. How many hours per week, on the average, does your supervisor spend at your VISTA project site(s)?

23 hours per week
[MEAN]

15. How often do you usually meet with the other VISTA project Volunteers? (Circle one.)

N = 715

Daily	1	40%
At least weekly	2	24%
Once or twice a month	3	26%
Less than once a month	4	9%
Never	5	1%
~~N/A (I am the only VISTA Volunteer)~~	-6-	
~~Other (specify)~~ _____	-7-	

16. Are there formal written evaluations of your performance?

Yes	76%	1
No	24%	2

If yes, how often? 4 times per year
(Quarterly) [MDN]

17. Do you submit regular activity reports to your project supervisor?

Yes	88%	1
No	12%	2

If yes, how often? 12 times per year
(Monthly)

TRAINING

18. When did you attend your VISTA Pre-Service Orientation (PSO)? July / 92 (month/year)

19. Where was your VISTA Pre-Service Orientation held? (Circle one.)

Local community for VISTA Volunteers on my VISTA project	1	3%
State-level for all VISTA Volunteers from state	2	17%
Regional setting for VISTA Volunteers from several states	3	79% [MODE]
Other (specify) _____	4	0%

20. When you first began serving as a VISTA Volunteer for this organization, did you receive an initial orientation to the organization's goals and activities?

Yes	92%	1
No	8%	2

If yes, how long was it? 3 days 0 hours

N = 652 MDN = 3 days

21. Have you received in-service training from the organization? (Include conferences and workshops.)

Yes	87%	1
No	13%	2

If yes, in the last year, how much in-service training have you received?

5 days 0 hours

N = 628 MDN = 5 days

22. What were the major topics on which in-service training was provided by the sponsoring organization or by VISTA/ACTION? (Circle all that apply.)

N			VISTA/ ACTION		Sponsoring Organization	
653	a.	Activities to be performed at the sponsoring organization	1	17%	(1)	62%
677	b.	Goals and objectives of the sponsoring organization	2	15%	(2)	65%
553	c.	Program administration/management	3	34%	(3)	47%
607	d.	Assessment of client need	4	19%	(4)	65%
644	e.	Recruitment of community volunteers	(5)	38%	5	35%
579	f.	Training of community volunteers	6	31%	(6)	50%
645	g.	Communications/public relations (including development of outreach/promotional material)	7	32%	(7)	38%
575	h.	Fundraising	(8)	41%	8	38%
550	i.	Content area of project	9	15%	(9)	72%
473	j.	Career development	(10)	40%	10	35%
36	k.	Other (specify) Tutoring (N = 36)	11	16%	(11)	61%

23. How useful was the in-service training you received? Please rate each of the categories of training listed below using the following scale:

1 = not useful
2 = somewhat useful
3 = useful
4 = very useful
~~NA = not applicable~~ (Recode to missing [8])

N	Activity	MEAN	Not Useful		MDN	Very Useful	
687	a. Activities to be performed at the sponsoring organization	3.33	1	2	(3)	4	NA
694	b. Goals and objectives of the sponsoring organization	3.35	1	2	(3)	4	NA
587	c. Program administration /management	3.07	1	2	(3)	4	NA
614	d. Assessment of client need	3.34	1	2	(3)	4	NA
643	e. Recruitment of local community volunteers	3.19	1	2	(3)	4	NA
600	f. Training of local community volunteers	3.21	1	2	(3)	4	NA
667	g. Communications/public relations (including development of outreach/promotional material)	3.32	1	2	(3)	4	NA
551	h. Fundraising	3.00	1	2	(3)	4	NA
589	i. Content area of project	3.17	1	2	(3)	4	NA
520	j. Career development	2.99	1	2	(3)	4	NA
56	k. Other (specify) Tutoring, Community issues	3.21	1	2	(3)	4	

24. In what areas do you need additional training to help you perform your assigned activities?

N = 572

a. Outreach (28%)

b. None (16%)

c. Office skills (13%)

IMPACT OF VISTA EXPERIENCE ON YOU

25. Please rate the extent to which your VISTA experience has helped you in each of the following areas. (Circle one in each row.) Note: it may not have helped because you may have already been strong in the area.

MEAN	Area	No effect	Somewhat Effective	MDN Effective	Very Effective
2.46	a. Change in career goals	1	2	(3)	4
3.04	b. Personal self-confidence	1	2	(3)	4
2.75	c. Ability to organize my time	1	2	(3)	4
2.81	d. Ability to complete tasks and assignments	1	2	(3)	4
2.82	e. Ability to get along with supervisors and co-workers	1	2	(3)	4
3.04	f. Ability to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds	1	2	(3)	4
3.08	g. Networking	1	2	(3)	4
3.00	h. Communication skills	1	2	(3)	4
3.51	i. Other (specify) Outreach	1	2	3	(4)

26. Please rate the importance of the following suggestions or recommendations to improve the VISTA program.

MEAN			MDN			
			Not important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
3.25	a.	Reimburse travel expenses	1	2	3	(4)
3.18	b.	Establish a network system for VISTAs (e.g., state or national newsletter)	1	2	(3)	4
3.19	c.	Additional VISTA training on special topics	1	2	(3)	4
2.56	d.	More general information on VISTA	1	2	(3)	4
3.03	e.	More contact with VISTA Volunteers from other projects	1	2	(3)	4
2.70	f.	More contact with ACTION state staff	1	2	(3)	4
3.79	g.	Other (specify) More money	1	2	3	(4)
3.64	h.	Other (specify) More benefits	1	2	3	(4)

Total scale score

27. What are your plans after you finish your current VISTA assignment? (Circle all that apply.)

a.	Obtain employment with sponsoring organization (specify type) Social service	1	27%
b.	Obtain employment outside of the sponsoring organization (specify type) Government	2	29%
c.	Continue my education (specify type) College	3	37%
d.	Re-enroll with VISTA	4	39%
e.	Undecided	5	26%
f.	Other (specify) Retire	6	5%

28. If you had to do it over again, would you choose to become a VISTA Volunteer?

Yes	97%	1
No	3%	2

29. What have you liked most about your VISTA experience?

N = 774

a. Helping people (39%)

b. Work experience (21%)

30. What have you liked least about your VISTA experience?

N = 684

a. Bureaucracy issues (28%)

b. Nothing (19%)

31. How have you benefitted personally from serving as a VISTA Volunteer?

N = 722

a. Satisfaction from helping others (41%)

b. Career development (34%)

c. Community awareness (15%)

d. Cultural exposure (8%)

EFFECT OF VISTA IN THE COMMUNITY

32. How has your presence as a VISTA volunteer influenced the effectiveness of the organization you serve? For each of the items below, please indicate whether there has been any change since your arrival as a VISTA and how much influence, if any, you have had on those changes.

Change in project since your arrival	Your influence
1 = decreased	1 = no influence
2 = no change	2 = minor influence
3 = increased	3 = moderate influence
~~DK = don't know~~	4 = major influence
	~~DK = don't know~~

N = 803

MEAN			Change in project					Your influence					MEAN
2.85	a.	Number of regular clients served	67%	1	2	(3)	DK	35%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	3.06
2.79	b.	Number of community volunteers recruited	64%	1	2	(3)	DK	33%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	3.05
2.62	c.	Groups/types of clients served	48%	1	2	(3)	DK	26%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	2.75
2.54	d.	Management or administrative systems .	33%	1	2	(3)	DK	21%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	2.52
2.58	e.	Cash resources for the operation of the program	43%	1	2	(3)	DK	23%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	2.51
2.70	f.	In-kind resources for the operation of the program	49%	1	2	(3)	DK	25%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	2.80
2.84	g.	Cooperation or partnerships with other organizations	67%	1	2	(3)	DK	32%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	3.06
2.82	h.	Plans for new programs or areas	63%	1	2	(3)	DK	33%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	3.16
2.68	i.	Skills of community members	48%	1	2	(3)	DK	25%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	2.81
2.69	j.	Leadership in the community	48%	1	2	(3)	DK	26%	1	2	(3)	4	DK	2.85
2.77	k.	Other (specify) Public relations (under "influence")	4%	1	2	(3)		3%	1	2	3	(4)		3.34

33. Please describe what benefits the VISTA project provides to the local community.

a. Referral services (69%)

b. Outreach and awareness (13%)

c. Building partnerships (6%)

d. Resource development (5%)

34. How would you rate the overall success of the VISTA project in achieving favorable results consistent with its goals? (Circle one.)

Not successful	1	1%
Somewhat successful	2	10%
Successful	3	35%
Very successful	4	54% [MDN] $\bar{x}$ = 3.41
~~I cannot really rate this~~	-5-	

VISTA PROJECT CONTINUATION/RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

35. In the last six months, what percentage of your time has been spent trying to obtain cash donations to support the VISTA project?

10 % [MDN]

36. In the last six months, what percentage of your time has been spent trying to obtain "in-kind" donations (e.g., food, clothing, furniture, donation of professional services, etc.) to support the VISTA project?

10 % . [MDN]

37. Has the sponsoring organization developed a resource mobilization plan for ensuring the continuation of the VISTA project activities and service delivery after VISTA funding ends?

Yes	48%	[MODE]	1
No	10%		2
I do not know	43%		3

If yes, did you participate in the development of the plan?

Yes	76%	[MODE]	1
No	24%		2

38. Have you been involved in resource mobilization activities to ensure the continuation of the VISTA project activities and service delivery after VISTA funding ends?

Yes	61%	[MODE]	1
No	39%		2

39. How will the overall program be affected when the VISTA project ends? (Circle one.)

$\bar{x} = 3.37$

I believe that our overall program may be discontinued	1	5%	
I believe that many of our services will be lost	2	23%	
I believe that a few services will be lost	3	25%	[MDN]
I believe that there will be little change in services	4	25%	
I expect there to be an expansion in services after the VISTA project ends	5	22%	

40. What are the primary barriers, if any, to continuation of this project?

N = 608

Lack of alternate funding (31%)

Lack of qualified community volunteers (16%)

None (14%)

BACKGROUND

41. Do you live in the community being served by the VISTA project?

Yes	81%	1
No	19%	2

If yes, how long have you lived in this community?

13 years 0 months

MDN = 13 years

If no, how far is your daily commute? 19 miles roundtrip

[MDN]

42. Were you...(Circle one.)

Recruited by the sponsoring organization	1	81%
Referred by ACTION	2	19%

43. Were you affiliated in any way with the sponsoring organization of this project (as a volunteer, client, board member, etc.) before you joined VISTA?

Yes	34%	1
No	66%	2

N	If yes, how were you affiliated? (Circle all that apply.)			
227	1.	Volunteer	1	28%
13	2.	Full-time employee	2	2%
24	3.	Part-time employee	3	3%
47	4.	Client	4	6%
21	5.	Board member	5	3%
11	6.	Other (specify) Student	6	2%

44. At the time you applied to VISTA, were you...(Circle all that apply.)

N				
84	a.	Employed full-time	1	11%
125	b.	Employed part-time	2	16%
320	c.	Unemployed	3	40%
152	d.	A student	4	19%
118	e.	Retired	5	15%
209	f.	Raising a family	6	26%
69	g.	Other (specify) Volunteer	7	9%

45. Did you have education or experience in your project area prior to joining VISTA?

a. Education:	65%	Yes...1	No...2	35%
b. Experience:	70%	Yes...1	No...2	30%

46. What is the most important reason you became a VISTA Volunteer?

N = 770

To serve and improve the community (86%)

To gain employment experience (13%)

Job-related benefits (1%)

CHARACTERISTICS

47. Male... 1 (23%) Female... 2 (77%)

48. Age: 36 [MDN]

$\bar{x}$ = 39

49. What is your racial/ethnic group? (Circle one.)

American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	3%
Black, but not of Hispanic origin	3	24%
Hispanic or Puerto Rican	4	12%
White, but not of Hispanic origin	5	57%
Other (specify) Multiracial	6	3%

50. How many years of formal schooling have you completed? (Circle one.)

Elementary School (0-8)	1	1%	
Some High School (9-11)	2	6%	
Completed High School (12)	3	17%	
Some College (13-15)	4	34%	[MDN]
Completed College (16)	5	29%	
Some graduate study (17 or more)	6	7%	
Completed graduate school	7	7%	

51. Please discuss any other comments or concerns you have about VISTA/ACTION not discussed above.

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

APPENDIX II

OMB Approval No. 3001-0131
Expires: 7/93

VISTA EVALUATION
VISTA Project Supervisor Mail Questionnaire

Name of Respondent: N = 239 (3/5/93)

Title: _____ Telephone #: _____

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by Development Associates for the ACTION Agency. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of VISTA volunteers on the projects to which they are assigned and the communities in which they are serving. We are particularly interested in views from the community regarding the effectiveness of VISTA projects.

The study is authorized under PL93-113, the "Domestic Service Volunteer Act", as amended. While you are not required to respond, your answers are needed to make our reports comprehensive and accurate. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential as required by the Federal Privacy Act. No individual or sponsoring organization will be identified in any report resulting from this study. These questions should take approximately 40-45 minutes to complete.*

Please answer the following questions as completely and accurately as you can. Thank you for your participation in this evaluation.

Please return to:

Development Associates, Inc.
c/o VISTA Evaluation
1730 N. Lynn St.
Arlington, VA 22209

* Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the ACTION Program Evaluation Office, Washington, D.C. 20525, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project, OMB No. 3001-0120, Washington, D.C. 20503.

** Notice to Individuals with Disabilities: Upon request, ACTION will provide alternative format versions of this report. Contact ACTION's Office of Policy Research and Evaluation, 1100 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20525. Tel.: (202) 606-4821.

1. Project start date: July 1/1991 (month/year)

2. Number of VISTA Volunteers authorized: 4

3. Current number of VISTA Volunteers: [MDNS] 4

4. Average number of VISTA Volunteers on board at any one time over the life of the project: 4

PROJECT SUPERVISOR INFORMATION

5. How long have you worked for the organization sponsoring this VISTA project?

4 years 6 months

MDN = 4.5 years

6. Do you work:

part-time 15% 1

full-time [MODE] 85% 2

7. Is your salary:

Paid by VISTA 1% 1

Paid by the sponsoring organization 91% 2

Paid by both VISTA and the sponsoring organization .7% 3

Unpaid volunteer. 2%

8. How long have you been supervisor of this VISTA project?

1 years 5 months

1.45 years

9. How many hours per week, on the average, do you spend at the VISTA project site(s)?

26 hours
[MEAN]

10. Were you involved in writing the proposal for this VISTA project?

Yes	79%	1
No	21%	2

11. Did you have prior education or experience in the program area covered by this VISTA project?

a. Education	75%	Yes...1	No...2	25%
b. Experience	91%	Yes...1	No...2	9%

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

12. How many years has the organization sponsoring this VISTA project been in existence?

15 years
[MDN]

13. What is the nature of the sponsoring organization? (Circle one.)

N = 231

Community action organization	1	16%
Community service organization	2	36%
County government	3	4%
Educational institution/school district	4	5%
Local chapters/affiliates of national organization	5	3%
Municipal/city government	6	1%
College or university	7	2%
Church or church-related organization	8	3%
State government	9	6%
Senior citizens service organization	10	2%
Other (specify) Non-profit [MODE]	11	24%

14. How many <u>paid</u> staff members (not including VISTA Volunteers) are involved in the efforts of this organization?

    a. Full-time staff 6
    b. Part-time staff 2 . [MDNS]

15. What is the total cash (not in-kind) amount that your organization receives from the following sources? (Estimate, if necessary.)

Means		[MDNS]	
1,921,727	a. Federal government (excluding VISTA)	$23,933	
1,071,659	b. State government	$23,300	
188,595	c. Local government	$ 2,000	
23,528	d. Grant funds from VISTA/ACTION	$ 500	$86,983
158,266	e. Private (individual) contributions	$ 8,750	
119,267	f. Other private sources (e.g., foundation grants)	$25,500	
391,959	g. Other (specify)_____	$ 3,000	
3,495,493	h. TOTAL CASH (Not in-kind contributions) ..	$300,000	

3,875,011

16. What is the total cash budget (not in-kind contributions) covered by your VISTA project? (Estimate, if necessary.)

$ 10,000

[MDN]
$\bar{x}$ = 69,477

17. a. How many community volunteers are involved in the various efforts of this organization?

$\bar{x}$ = 314 [MDN] 85

b. Has the number of community volunteers changed significantly since the VISTA project began?

Yes 81% 1

No 15% 2

c. Please identify the number of community volunteers involved in each of the following activities. (A volunteer may be involved in more than one activity.)

Community Volunteer Activities	Number [MDNS]
1. Member of Board of Directors	13
2. Assist in fundraising activities	10
3. Assist in project development/ coordination	7
4. Perform administrative or clerical tasks	3
5. Provide direct service to clients	25
6. Other (specify) [moot]	0

PROJECT INFORMATION

18. Do you have an advisory council for the VISTA project (separate from the organization's Board of Directors)?

Yes 60% 1

No 40% 2

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If yes, estimate how many of your advisory council members:

		Number	[MDNS]
a.	are local business people	2	
b.	are local government officials	0	
c.	represent low-income persons in the community	4	
d.	are in the nonprofit private sector	2	
e.	other (specify) Clients and Teachers	1	[Bi-modal]
f.	TOTAL NUMBER on council	8	

19. a. How often does the advisory council meet? (Circle one.) MDN = Quarterly
N = 136

monthly	1	28%
semiannually	2	7%
annually	3	22%
other (specify) Every six months	4	36%
N/A (~~There is no advisory council.~~)	5	7%

Bimonthly
Quarterly
Annually

b. In which of the following activities does the advisory council participate? (Circle all that apply.)

1. Assists in development of VISTA project proposal(s)	1	36%
2. Reviews VISTA project application(s)	2	29%
3. Reviews VISTA project implementation and operations	3	51%
4. Submits written reports to the sponsor	4	18%
5. Assists in VISTA project operations	5	39%
6. Other (specify) Consultant to Project [MODE]	6	11%

20. How many of the members of your organization's Board of Directors (estimate if necessary):

	Number [MDN]
a. are local business people	5
b. are local government officials	1
c. represent low-income persons in the community	3
d. are in the nonprofit private sector	2
e. other (specify) Retirees [MODE]	2
f. TOTAL NUMBER on board	15

21. a. How often does the Board of Directors meet? (Circle one.) MDN = Monthly
N = 217

monthly	1	68%
~~semiannually~~ Bimonthly	2	9%
~~annually~~ Quarterly	3	14%
~~other (specify)~~ Every six months	4	8%
Annually		1%

b. In which of the following activities does the Board of Directors participate? (Circle all that apply.) N = 239

1. Assists in development of VISTA project proposal(s)	1	31%
2. Reviews VISTA project application(s)	2	44%
3. Reviews VISTA project implementation and operations	3	70%
4. Submits written reports to the sponsor	4	5%
5. Assists in VISTA project operations	5	36%
6. Other (specify) Policy review/fundraising [Bimodal]	6	14%

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

22. What are the primary and secondary (if any) activities of your VISTA project? What are the primary and secondary activities of your sponsoring organization? (Circle one category in each column.)

N = 239

		Primary VISTA Activity		Secondary VISTA Activity		Primary SPONSOR Activity		Secondary SPONSOR Activity	
a.	Community Planning and Organizing	30%	01	25%	01	34%	01	15%	01
b.	Economic Development	11%	02	11%	02	16%	02	17%	02
c.	Education	27%	03	17%	03	28%	03	18%	03
d.	Housing	11%	04	8%	04	15%	04	11%	04
e.	Job Development	8%	05	10%	05	12%	05	10%	05
f.	Vocational Education	5%	06	8%	06	6%	06	10%	06
g.	Health/Nutrition	7%	07	12%	07	11%	07	14%	07
h.	Homelessness/Shelter	10%	08	10%	08	11%	08	10%	08
i.	Hunger	8%	09	10%	09	10%	09	11%	09
j.	Mental Health, Counseling	5%	10	10%	10	11%	10	13%	10
k.	Child Abuse and Neglect	7%	11	10%	11	11%	11	9%	11
l.	Domestic Violence	5%	12	8%	12	8%	12	10%	12
m.	Runaway Youth	4%	13	7%	13	7%	13	7%	13
n.	Refugees	3%	14	4%	14	3%	14	7%	14
o.	Substance Abuse	8%	15	11%	15	10%	15	12%	15
p.	Energy and Environmental	2%	16	6%	16	4%	16	9%	16
q.	Literacy	27%	17	8%	17	21%	17	13%	17
r.	Other Activities (specify)	26%	18	4%	18	16%	18	6%	18

Referral

Social services

23. In what ways are the efforts of this VISTA project related to the efforts of other organizations in the community? (Circle all that apply.) N = 239

(2)	a.	We receive referrals of clients from other organizations (e.g., community agencies, employers, churches)	1	82%
(1)	b.	We make referrals of clients to other organizations	2	86%
(3)	c.	We meet regularly with other organizations to discuss client needs and to plan projects	3	77%
(9)	d.	Our projects/activities are sometimes taken over or assumed by other organizations	4	40%
(10)	e.	We sometimes take over or assume the projects/ activities of other organizations	5	38%
(7)	f.	We have joint training of staff or volunteers with other organizations	6	59%
(8)	g.	We provide volunteers to other organizations	7	44%
(5)	h.	We receive volunteers from other organizations	8	61%
(4)	i.	We provide technical assistance to other organizations	9	66%
(6)	j.	We receive technical assistance from other organizations	10	61%
(11)	k.	Other (specify) Joint projects [MODE]	11	11%

PROJECT CLIENTS

24. Estimate the number of people in your community served by the VISTA project. 500

25. What groups does this VISTA project serve? (Circle all that apply.)

N = 239

a.	Physically/mentally disabled	1	53%
b.	Migrants	2	22%
c.	Senior Citizens	3	56%
d.	Youth	4	66%
e.	Refugees	5	18%
f.	Low Income	6	87%
g.	Homeless	7	44%
h.	Families in Crisis	8	56%
i.	Literacy Clients	9	46%
j.	Unemployed	10	55%
k.	Other Clients (specify) Abused [MODE]	11	20%

26. What percentage of the people served by the VISTA project are (Estimate, if necessary):

a.	Male	40 %
b.	Female	60 %
	TOTAL	100%

27. What percentage of the people served by the VISTA project are (Estimate, if necessary):

a.	Hispanic	13.6 %	
b.	Black, non-Hispanic	35.8 %	
c.	White, non-Hispanic	42.3 %	MEANS
d.	Asian/Pacific Islander	4.7 %	
e.	Native American	3.6 %	
	TOTAL	100%	

28. What percentage of the people served by the VISTA project are (Estimate, if necessary):

a.	10 years old or less	14.3 %	
b.	11-17 years old	16.7 %	
c.	18-25 years old	16.2 %	
d.	26-45 years old	26.6 %	MEANS
e.	46-60 years old	14.3 %	
f.	61 years old or more	11.9 %	
	TOTAL	100%	

29. What percentage of the people served by the VISTA project (Estimate, if necessary):

$\bar{x}$ = 71%	have family incomes at or below the poverty level? (e.g., family of 4 = $10,563)	80 %	
$\bar{x}$ = 60%	receive public assistance?	65 %	MDNS

30. In the community served by this project, what is the... (Estimate, if necessary):

$\bar{x}$ = 20.1%	Unemployment rate?	10 %
$\bar{x}$ = 36.7%	Percentage of households living in poverty?	25 %
	Percentage of adults with less than a ninth grade education?	22 %

VISTA VOLUNTEERS/TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

31. How were the VISTA Volunteers recruited? (Circle all that apply.)

N = 239

a.	Newspaper advertisement	1	55%
b.	Radio or television announcement	2	14%
c.	Word-of-mouth	3	82%
d.	Local campus recruitment	4	29%
e.	Referral from ACTION	5	48%
f.	Volunteer of organization	6	43%
g.	Board member of organization	7	10%
h.	Client of sponsoring organization	8	29%
i.	Referral from other community groups	9	45%
j.	Other (specify) Job placement organization	10	11%
k.	~~Other (specify)~~	11	

32. Did you provide the VISTA Volunteers with an initial orientation to the organization's goals and activities when they arrived at the VISTA project?

Yes 99% 1

No 1% 2

If yes, how long was the orientation? ____ hours ____ days

"Days" mdn = 3.0 days

33. In general, to what extent did the VISTA Volunteers who were recruited by your organization require skills training to perform their job functions? (Circle one.)

No additional training was required 1 5%

Some additional training was required ..... 2 82% [MDN]

A great deal of additional training was required 3 13%

34. Does your organization provide the VISTA Volunteers with in-service training (e.g., conferences and workshops)?

Yes 95% 1

No 5% 2

If yes, how much training per year do they receive from your organization?

"Days2" mdn = 5.25 days (5 days, 2hrs) ____ hours ____ days

35. What are the major topics on which in-service training is provided by VISTA/ACTION and/or by your organization? (Circle all that apply.)

N			VISTA/ ACTION		Sponsoring Organization	
207	a.	Activities to be performed at the sponsoring organization	1	4%	1	69%
213	b.	Goals and objectives of the sponsoring organization	2	2%	2	81%
170	c.	Program administration/management	3	13%	3	62%
179	d.	Assessment of client need	4	6%	4	75%
204	e.	Recruitment of community volunteers	5	14%	5	47%
196	f.	Training of community volunteers	6	10%	6	62%
205	g.	Communications/public relations (including development of outreach/ promotional material)	7	12%	7	52%
170	h.	Fundraising	8	13%	8	52%
186	i.	Content area of project	9	4%	9	81%
161	j.	Career development	10	24%	10	45%
22	k.	Other (specify) Networking [MODE]	11	14%	11	77%

36. In what areas do the VISTA Volunteers need additional training to help them perform their assigned activities?

[M = 174] 3/4/93

a. Communication skills (31%)

b. Supervision (14%)

c. Resource development (9%)

37. How many hours per week, on the average, do VISTA Volunteers spend on the VISTA project? 40 [MDN] hours

38. How many evenings per week, on the average, do VISTA Volunteers spend on the VISTA project? 1 [MDN] evenings per week

39. How many weekends per month, on the average, do VISTA Volunteers spend on the VISTA project? 1 [MDN] weekends per month

40. In which activities are VISTA Volunteers particularly effective or successful? Please rate each of the activities listed below according to the following scale:

1 = Not successful
2 = Somewhat successful
3 = Successful
4 = Very successful
NA = Not applicable

	Not Successful			Very Successful		MEANS
	MEDIANS					
a. Client recruitment	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.23
b. Community outreach/public awareness (including development of outreach/ promotional material)	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.37
c. Recruitment of community volunteers	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.05
d. Training of community volunteers	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.02
e. Project recordkeeping	1	2	(3)	4	NA	2.99
f. General office administration (including development of management or administrative systems)	1	2	(3)	4	NA	2.75
g. Fundraising	1	2	(3)	4	NA	2.73
h. Assessment of client needs	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.19
i. Resource development	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.11
j. Program development/coordination	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.16
k. Committee/council meetings or activities	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.13
l. Providing direct service to clients	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.36
m. Other (specify) Staff relations	1	2	3	(4)		3.70
n. Other (specify) Networking	1	2	(3)	4		2.83

41. To what extent does each VISTA Volunteer perform the same or different activities? (Circle one.)

Each VISTA volunteer performs basically the same activities	15%	1
There is some overlap among VISTA volunteers, but they also have some distinct activities	58%	2
There is little or no overlap in what each VISTA volunteer does	78%	3

42. How many hours per week do you or other organization staff spend supervising VISTA Volunteers?

10 hours
[MDN]

EFFECTS OF THE VISTA PROJECT

43. Given the amount of time necessary to train and supervise, are VISTA Volunteers cost-effective to your organization?

Yes	97%	1
No	3%	2

Please explain:

_____

_____

_____

44. How has the presence of VISTA Volunteers influenced the effectiveness of your organization? For each of the items below, please indicate whether there has been any change since the VISTA Volunteers began and how much influence, if any, the VISTA Volunteers have had on those changes.

Change since VISTA Volunteer	Influence of VISTA Volunteer
1 = decreased	1 = no influence
2 = no change	2 = minor influence
3 = increased	3 = moderate influence
	4 = major influence

	MEANS Change since VISTA		Influence of VISTA	
a. Number of regular clients served	1 2 3	2.82	1 2 3 4	3.20
b. Number of community volunteers recruited	1 2 3	2.83	1 2 3 4	3.33
c. Groups/types of clients served	1 2 3	2.60	1 2 3 4	2.80
d. Management or administrative systems	1 2 3	2.43	1 2 3 4	2.30
e. Cash resources for the operation of your organization	1 2 3	2.56	1 2 3 4	2.42
f. In-kind resources for the operation of your organization	1 2 3	2.77	1 2 3 4	2.91
g. Cooperation or partnerships with other organizations	1 2 3	2.85	1 2 3 4	3.16
h. Staff donated by other organizations	1 2 3	2.20	1 2 3 4	1.98
i. Training provided by other organizations	1 2 3	2.34	1 2 3 4	2.06
j. Plans for new programs or areas	1 2 3	2.65	1 2 3 4	2.76
k. Skills of community members	1 2 3	2.73	1 2 3 4	2.87
l. Leadership in the community	1 2 3	2.71	1 2 3 4	2.84
m. Other (specify) _____	1 2 3	2.80	1 2 3 4	2.91

45. We are interested in the specific effect of the VISTA Volunteers. Please estimate the changes attributable to VISTA Volunteers in each of the areas listed below.

	[MDNS] When the VISTA project began	Present	MDM Difference score
a. Cash resources for the operation of your organization	$ 23,033	$ 37,000	11,000
b. In-kind resources for the operation of your organization	$ 3,000	$ 10,000	5,000
c. Number of community volunteers	25	70	35
d. Number of staff donated by other organizations	0	0	0
e. Number of staff trained by other organizations	0	0	0
f. Number of regular clients served	120	300	115

46. Please list the benefits the VISTA project provides to the local community.

N = 222
2/25/93

a. Outreach & awareness (24%)
b. Direct services (16%)
c. Referral services (12%)
d. Building partnerships (11%)

47. Please list the benefits the VISTA project provides to the VISTA Volunteers.

N = 222
3/1/93

a. Career development (45%)
b. Community awareness (31%)
c. Job-related benefits (15%)
d. Satisfaction (5%)

48. How would you rate the overall success of the VISTA project in achieving favorable results consistent with its goals? (Circle one.)

Not successful		1	0%
Somewhat successful		2	8%
Successful	[MEAN = 3.50]	3	32%
Very successful	[MEDIAN]	4	60%
~~I cannot really rate this~~		5	

49. Would you use a VISTA Volunteer again in your organization?

Yes	98%	1	
No	2%	2	

Please explain:

_____

_____

_____

50. What changes in the use of the VISTA Volunteers, or VISTA/ACTION, if any, would you make?

N = 188

a.	VISTA Flexibility (e.g., direct service prohibition)	27%
b.	None	21%
c.	Supervision and training	17%
d.	Recruitment policy	10%

VISTA PROJECT CONTINUATION/RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

51. How will the project be affected when the VISTA project ends? (Circle one.)

I believe that our overall program may be discontinued	1	0%	
I believe that many of our activities will be lost	2	16%	
I believe that a few activities will be lost	3	37%	MDN
I believe that there will be little change in activities	4	19%	[MEAN = 3.6]
I expect there to be an expansion in activities after the VISTA project ends	5	25%	

52. Have you developed a resource mobilization plan for ensuring the continuation of the VISTA project activities and service delivery after VISTA funding ends?

Yes	78%	1
No	22%	2

53. Annually, how much money do you expect to raise to continue the activities and services associated with the VISTA program?

$\bar{x}$ = 50,684 [MDN] $ 20,000

54. How much money have you raised so far this year?

aggregate [MDN] $ 4,750

$\bar{x}$ = 35,764
target $ = .43

55. What has been your strategy for ensuring the continuation of the VISTA project activities and service delivery after VISTA funding ends? (Circle all that apply.)

N = 239

a. Writing proposals for government funding	1	57%
b. Writing proposals for private funding	2	69%
c. Seeking private donations (from corporations and private citizens)	3	68%
d. Finding community volunteers to perform the activities and services	4	85%
e. Finding another organization to carry on the activities and services	5	30%
f. Other (specify) More staff	6	12%

56. Do you use VISTA Volunteers to assist in generating continuation funding?

Yes	1	58%
No	2	

57. Have you encountered any difficulties in raising additional resources?

Yes	1	64%
No	2	36%

If yes, what are the primary barriers, if any, to continuation of this VISTA project?

N = 129 2/26/93

a. Resource competition (23%)

b. Alternate funding (22%)

c. Economic recession (16%)

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58. Have you enjoyed any successes in raising additional resources?

Yes 79% 1

No 21% 2

If yes, what are the key elements that contributed to your success in raising additional resources?

N = 153 3/1/93

a. Fundraising skills (28%)

b. Responsive VISTA projects (20%)

c. Outreach and awareness (16%)

59. Please discuss any other comments or concerns you have about VISTA not discussed above.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

vistaqf.dir
11/04/92

APPENDIX III

OMB Approval No. 3001-0131
Expires: 7/93

VISTA EVALUATION
VISTA Former Project Supervisor Mail Questionnaire

Name of Respondent: N = 192 (3/5/93)

Title: _____ Telephone #: _____

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by Development Associates for the ACTION Agency. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of VISTA volunteers on the project they are assigned to and the communities in which they are serving.

The study is authorized under PL93-113, the "Domestic Service Volunteer Act", as amended. While you are not required to respond, your answers are needed to make our reports comprehensive and accurate. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential as required by the Federal Privacy Act. No individual or sponsoring organization will be identified in any report resulting from this study. These questions should take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete.*

Please answer the following questions as completely and accurately as you can. Thank you for your participation in this evaluation.

Please return to:

Development Associates, Inc.
c/o VISTA Evaluation
1730 N. Lynn St.
Arlington, VA 22209

*Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the ACTION Program Evaluation Office, Washington, D.C. 20525; and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project, OMB No. 3001-0120, Washington, D.C. 20503.

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FORMER PROJECT SUPERVISOR INFORMATION

1. Do you work for the organization that sponsored the VISTA project?

Yes ..... 89% [MODE] 1

No 11% 2

If yes, how long have you worked for this organization?

MDN = 6 years _____ years _____ months

2. How long were you supervisor of this VISTA project?

MDN = 2 years, 3 months _____ years _____ months

3. Were you involved in writing the proposal for this VISTA project?

Yes ..... 68% [MODE] 1

No 32% 2

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

4. How many years has the organization that sponsored this VISTA project been in existence?

14 years

MDN = 14 years

5. What is the nature of the sponsoring organization? (Circle one.)

N = 190

Community action organization	1	16%	
Community service organization	2	45%	[MODE]
County government	3	4%	
Educational institution/school district	4	3%	
Local chapters/affiliates of national organizations	5	3%	
Municipal/city government	6	4%	
College or university	7	1%	
Church or church-related organization	8	4%	
State government	9	5%	
Senior citizens service organization	10	3%	
Other (specify) Non-profit agency	11	12%	

6. What groups does the organization serve? What groups did the VISTA project serve? (Circle all that apply in each column.)

N		SPONSOR		VISTA		BOTH
93	a. Physically/mentally disabled	1	36%	1	1%	63%
50	b. Migrants	2	44%	2	8%	48%
123	c. Senior Citizens	3	33%	3	6%	61%
126	d. Youth	4	21%	4	6%	61%
35	e. Refugees	5	54%	5	9%	37%
158	f. Low Income	6	17%	6	3%	80%
106	g. Homeless	7	30%	7	3%	67%
119	h. Families in Crisis	8	29%	8	3%	68%
76	i. Literacy Clients	9	28%	9	12%	61%
129	j. Unemployed	10	35%	10	4%	61%
32	k. Other Clients (specify) All groups	11	25%	11	6%	69%

7. What are the primary and secondary (if any) activities of this organization? What were the primary and secondary activities of the VISTA project? (Circle one in each column.)

N			Primary SPONSOR Activity		Secondary SPONSOR Activity		Primary VISTA Activity		Secondary VISTA Activity		N
61	a.	Community Planning and Organizing	01	64%	01	36%	01	65%	01	36%	66
36	b.	Economic Development	02	50%	02	50%	02	56%	02	44%	25
70	c.	Education	03	64%	03	36%	03	54%	03	46%	56
37	d.	Housing	04	68%	04	32%	04	69%	04	31%	26
38	e.	Job Development	05	42%	05	58%	05	73%	05	27%	33
20	f.	Vocational Education	06	50%	06	50%	06	33%	06	67%	15
37	g.	Health/Nutrition	07	64%	07	36%	07	54%	07	46%	24
47	h.	Homelessness/Shelter	08	64%	08	36%	08	58%	08	42%	24
28	i.	Hunger	09	68%	09	32%	09	67%	09	33%	24
36	j.	Mental Health, Counseling	10	50%	10	50%	10	44%	10	56%	16
29	k.	Child Abuse and Neglect	11	62%	11	38%	11	55%	11	45%	20
20	l.	Domestic Violence	12	65%	12	35%	12	69%	12	36%	14
13	m.	Runaway Youth	13	62%	13	38%	13	50%	13	50%	6
9	n.	Refugees	14	44%	14	56%	14	33%	14	67%	3
26	o.	Substance Abuse	15	54%	15	46%	15	48%	15	52%	21
7	p.	Energy and Environmental	16	43%	16	57%	16	0%	16	100%	2
26	q.	Literacy	17	65%	17	35%	17	66%	17	34%	32
45	r.	Other Activities (specify)	18	76%	18	24%	18	81%	18	19%	43

Services to special community groups

Volunteer recruitment

VISTA PROJECT INFORMATION

8. Estimate the average number of people in the community that your VISTA project served per year. 472 [MDN]

9. In which activities were VISTA Volunteers particularly effective or successful? Please rate each of the activities listed below using the following scale:

1 = Not successful
2 = Somewhat successful
3 = Successful
4 = Very successful
~~5 = Not applicable~~ [Recode to missing 8]

Success 1 to Success10 N		SD	Not Successful		MDN	Very Successful		X̄
158	a. Client recruitment	.89	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.12
179	b. Community outreach/public awareness (including development of outreach/ promotional material)	.83	1	2	3	(4)	NA	3.33
172	c. Recruitment of community volunteers	.94	1	2	(3)	4	NA	2.82
161	d. Training of community volunteers	.93	1	2	(3)	4	NA	2.70
166	e. Project recordkeeping	.88	1	2	(3)	4	NA	2.95
140	f. General office administration (including development of management or administrative systems)	.87	1	2	(3)	4	NA	2.84
136	g. Fundraising	.98	1	2	(3)	4	NA	2.62
157	h. Assessment of client needs	.76	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.20
165	i. Resource development	.83	1	2	(3)	4	NA	3.01
8	j. Other (specify) Program development	.90	1	2	(3)	4		2.87

Sum scale score

EFFECTS OF VISTA PROJECT

10. How did the presence of the VISTA project influence the effectiveness of your organization? For each of the items below, please indicate whether there was any change during the time the VISTA Volunteers were active.

Change during VISTA
Project

1 = decreased
2 = no change
3 = increased
~~CR = cannot rate this~~ (Recoded to missing [7])

Influl to Influll MEAN		Change during VISTA [MDN]	SD	N
2.81	a. Number of regular clients served	1 2 (3) CR	.42	178
2.76	b. Number of community volunteers recruited	1 2 (3) CR	.49	173
2.56	c. Groups/types of clients served	1 2 (3) CR	.49	176
2.38	d. Management or administrative systems	1 (2) 3 CR	.53	158
2.41	e. Cash resources for the operation of your organization	1 (2) 3 CR	.59	160
2.72	f. In-kind resources for the operation of your organization	1 2 (3) CR	.48	168
2.82	g. Cooperation or partnerships with other organizations	1 2 (3) CR	.40	179
2.75	h. Plans for new programs or areas	1 2 (3) CR	.43	174
2.68	i. Skills of community members	1 2 (3) CR	.48	166
2.64	j. Leadership in the community	1 2 (3) CR	.48	165
2.75	k. Other (specify) Public relations	1 2 (3)	.75	8

11. Given the amount of time necessary to train and supervise, were VISTA Volunteers cost-effective to your organization?

Yes	86%	1
No	14%	2

12. What changes in the use of VISTA Volunteers could have improved their success?

N = 146

Recruit better volunteers (19%)

Better training (14%)

Flexibility to provide direct service (12%)

None (17%)

13. How would you rate the overall success of the VISTA project in achieving favorable results consistent with its goals? (Circle one.)

Not successful	8%	1	
Somewhat successful	14%	2	
Successful	32%	3	[MDN]
Very successful	46%	4	
I cannot really rate this		5	

x = 3.15 SD = .55 N = 191

VISTA PROJECT CONTINUATION/RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

14. In your opinion, how successful was the VISTA project in obtaining the following types of additional resources?

D	Type of Resource	Was not successful	Was somewhat successful	Was Successful	Was very successful	Not a VISTA Goal	MEAN
01	a. Cash resources .....(136)	1	2	3	4	5	2.49
97	b. In-kind resources .....(158)	1	2	3	4	5	3.02
95	c. Community volunteers .....(168)	1	2	3	4	5	2.86
97	d. Staff donated by other organizations .....(104)	1	2	3	4	5	2.19
15	e. Staff paid by sponsor ..... (82)	1	2	3	4	5	2.26
89	f. Training .....(153)	1	2	3	4	5	2.92
08	g. Facilities .....(101)	1	2	3	4	5	2.67
10	h. Telephone & utilities ..... (75)	1	2	3	4	5	2.40
0	i. Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5	4.0
	_____	1	2	3	4	5	
	_____	1	2	3	4	5	

15. Did you develop a resource mobilization plan for ensuring the continuation of the VISTA project activities and service delivery after VISTA funding ended?

Yes	82%	1
No	18%	2

16. What was your strategy for ensuring the continuation of the VISTA project activities and service delivery after VISTA funding ended? (Circle all that apply.)

(3)	48%	a. Writing proposals for government funding	1
(2)	56%	b. Writing proposals for private funding	2
	56%	c. Seeking private donations (from corporations and private citizens)	3
(1)	68%	d. Finding community volunteers to perform the activities and services	4
(4)	31%	e. Finding another organization to carry on the activities and services	5
	4%	f. Other (specify) N = 7 Unspecified	6

17. Did you use VISTA Volunteers to assist in generating continuation funding?

Yes	41%	1
No	59%	2

18. What happened to the activities and services associated with the VISTA project(s) after VISTA funding ended? (Circle one.) N = 183

There was no further need for activities/services (project accomplished its objectives)	1	2%
All activities and services were discontinued	2	3%
Most activities and services were discontinued	3	5%
Some activities and services were discontinued	4	25%
There was little or no change in activities and services	5	32% [MDN]
Activities/services were transferred to another organization (specify) MODE = unspecified	6	9%
Activities and services increased	7	24%

19. What staff are responsible for continuing the activities/services associated with the VISTA project(s)? (Circle all that apply.)

a. Paid staff at your organization	1	84%
b. Community volunteers at your organization	2	67%
c. Paid staff at another organization	3	19%
d. Community volunteers at another organization	4	20%
e. VISTA Volunteers at another organization	5	3%
f. Other (specify) Board of Directors	6	3%
g. Other (specify) Community Leaders (N = 1)	7	1%
h. N/A (activities/services were not continued)	8	4%

20. What change has occurred in your organization since VISTA funding ended? For each of the items below, please indicate what change, if any, has taken place.

Change since VISTA project

1 = decreased
2 = no change
3 = increased
~~CR = cannot rate this~~ (Recoded to missing [7])

SD	Changl to Chang2 N		Change since VISTA [MDN]	x
.69	176	a. Number of paid staff	1 (2) 3 CR	2.33
.70	178	b. Number of regular clients served	1 2 (3) CR	2.51
.75	173	c. Number of community volunteers recruited	1 2 (3) CR	2.38
.63	176	d. Groups/types of clients served	1 (2) 3 CR	2.29
.60	157	e. Management or administrative systems	1 (2) 3 CR	2.39
.70	169	f. Cash resources for the operation of your organization .	1 (2) 3 CR	2.34
.68	166	g. In-kind resources for the operation of your organization	1 2 (3) CR	2.45
.60	169	h. Cooperation or partnerships with other organizations .	1 2 (3) CR	2.57
.60	163	i. Plans for new programs or areas	1 2 (3) CR	2.63
.58	142	j. Skills of community members	1 (2) 3 CR	2.44
.59	148	k. Leadership in the community	1 2 (3) CR	2.50
0	2	l. Other (specify) _____	1 (2) 3	2.00

Total scale score a - k

21. What were the primary barriers to continuation of your project?

BARRIER

N = 117

Lack of alternate funding (33%)

Lack of qualified personnel/volunteers (24%)

Lack of community involvement (10%)

Sponsor/ACTION politics (15%)

22. Please discuss any other comments or concerns you have about VISTA not discussed above.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

vistaq.for
11/04/92

APPENDIX IV

OMB Approval No. 3001-0131
Expires: 7/93

VISTA EVALUATION
VISTA Community Mail Questionnaire

Name of Respondent: N = 642 3/5/93

Title: _____ Telephone #: _____

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AFFILIATION INFORMATION

1. How long have you lived in the community being served by the VISTA project?

19 years 0 months

MDN = 19 years

2. What is your affiliation with the organization sponsoring this VISTA project? (Circle all that apply.)

a. Member of Board of Directors	1	37%
b. Member of advisory council	2	22%
c. Representative of low-income persons in community	3	11%
d. Client	4	3%
e. Other (specify) Community member	5	43%

3. How long have you been affiliated with this sponsoring organization?

4 years 0 months

MDN = 4 years

4. Why did you become involved in this sponsoring organization?

N = 617

To help make a difference in the community (35%)

Already involved in other community efforts (18)

Agree with philosophy and goals of sponsor (18%)

5. Did you participate in the planning of the VISTA project?

Yes	34%	1
No	66%	2

6. Have you met with the VISTA project supervisor to discuss the progress of the VISTA project?

Yes 63% 1

No 37% 2

If yes, how often? 4 [MDN] times per year

EFFECT OF VISTA PROJECT IN THE COMMUNITY

7. What do you think are the two areas of greatest need in your community?

N = 628

a. Community/economic development (20%)

b. Community awareness (18%)

8. How would you rate the success of the VISTA project in addressing the first need that you have identified? (Circle one.) N = 91 MEAN = 3.62

Not successful	1	1%
Somewhat successful	2	26%
Don't know	3	11%
Successful	4	32% [MDN]
Very successful	5	30%
~~VISTA project does not address this need~~	5	
~~I do not know~~	6	

9. How would you rate the success of the VISTA project in addressing the second need that you have identified? (Circle one.)

		N = 86
Not successful	1	1%
Somewhat successful	2	29%
Don't know	3	5%
Successful	4	35% [MDN]
Very successful	5	30%
~~VISTA project does not address this need~~	-5-	
~~I do not know~~	-6-	

10. How has the presence of VISTA Volunteers helped the community? (Circle all that apply.)

a.	Increased cooperation or partnerships with other organizations	1	83%
b.	Increased skills of community members (specify) _____ _____	2	52%
c.	Increased leadership in the community	3	54%
d.	Increased information for use in the community	4	82%
e.	Promoted employment opportunities for low income residents	5	39%
f.	Provided services to assist those in need	6	85%
g.	Other (specify) Increased community participation	7	14% N = 88
h.	Other (specify) Increased community awareness	8	5% N = 29

11. How supportive do you think the community is of the VISTA project? (Circle one.) MEAN = 4.49 N = 637

Unaware of VISTA	1	12%
Not supportive	2	0%
Somewhat supportive	3	20%
Supportive	4	31% [MDN]
Very supportive	5	30%
I do not know	6	6%

12. Please describe what benefits the VISTA project provides to the local community.

N = 603

a. Direct services (53%)

b. Community unification (12%)

c. Outreach and awareness (8%)

d. Resource development (6%)

13. Please describe what benefits the VISTA project provides to the VISTA Volunteers.

N = 554

a. Community awareness (41%)

b. Satisfaction re helping (25%)

c. Job-related benefits (16%)

d. Career development (8%)

14. What changes in project activities or goals do you think would be most likely to improve the success of this VISTA project?

N = 410

a. Better community PR (21%)

b. None (20%)

c. VISTA flexibility (16%)

d. Increased use of community volunteers (14%)

PROJECT CONTINUATION/RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

15. Has the sponsoring organization developed a resource mobilization plan for ensuring the continuation of the VISTA project activities and service delivery after VISTA funding ends?

Yes 45% 1

No 8% 2

I do not know ..... 47% [MODE] 3

If yes, did you participate in the development of the plan?

Yes ..... 56% [MODE] 1

No 44% 2

16. Have you been involved in resource mobilization activities to ensure the continuation of the VISTA project activities and service delivery after VISTA funding ends?

Yes 36% 1

No ..... 64% [MODE] 2

17. How will the program be affected when the VISTA project ends? (Circle one.)

$\bar{x}$ = 3.03 N = 607

I believe that the program may be discontinued	1	7%
I believe that many services will be lost	2	28%
I believe that a few services will be lost	3	33% [MDN]
I believe that there will be little change in services	4	17%
I expect there to be an expansion in services after the VISTA project ends	5	15%

18. What are the primary barriers, if any, to continuation of this VISTA project?

N = 463

a. Lack of alternate funding (50%)

b. None (18%)

c. Lack of community support (13%)

d. Objections to constraints of government regulations (9%)

COMMUNITY MEMBER INFORMATION

19. What is your occupation? (Circle one.) N = 635

Government employee	1	32%
Private sector employee	2	13%
Private nonprofit employee	3	25%
Self-employed (specify) _____	4	6%
Unemployed	5	3%
Retired	6	13%
Other (specify) Teacher	7	9%

20. What is your racial/ethnic group? (Circle one.)

American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	1%
Black, but not of Hispanic origin	3	17%
Hispanic or Puerto Rican	4	2%
White, but not of Hispanic origin	5	77%
Other (specify) Multiracial	6	1%

21. Please discuss any other comments or concerns you have about VISTA/ACTION not discussed above.

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

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11/04/92